
G20 CONSUMER SUMMIT 2018

Statement from the co-hosts, the Argentinian Directorate for Consumer Protection and Consumers International, reflecting the issues discussed at the G20 Consumer Summit held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 15 and 16 May 2018.

We urge the authorities in G20 countries to support consumers through the following steps:

- To continue G20 dialogue and attention to the critical importance of addressing consumer protection, through future G20 Consumer Summits and other supportive mechanisms.
- To support the proposal to declare a World Consumer Protection Week to be agreed at UNCTAD's Intergovernmental Expert Group on Consumer Protection Law and Policy and subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly.
- To make a commitment to support improvements in the security and data protection of children's connected products and support international co-operation in this area and report back on these initiatives to the G20 Digital Ministers summit in 2019.
- To make active use of product safety alert systems to ensure unsafe products are registered and to support initiatives to expand the global reach and use of these systems through capacity building and increased co-operation between regional and international systems.
- To make assessments of the impact of inappropriate production and consumption practices that lead to food loss and waste and develop tools to raise global awareness of this problem and support its resolution.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

1. The second G20 Consumer Summit brought together consumer ministers, consumer protection agencies, consumer organisations, civil society and businesses from G20 and non-G20 countries to reaffirm **the importance of consumer protection** in improving individual welfare, supporting equitable and sustainable economic growth and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. In a globalised world, where consumers face many of the same challenges and opportunities, working together is increasingly important in helping us reach our national and international goals. We recognise the important work done by international and regional organisations to address consumer issues and develop guidance on consumer protection frameworks including the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection and guidance produced by OECD and regional groups. We call on the G20r **to support these international processes as well as the G20 Consumer Summit** and to consider additional mechanisms for sharing views and ensuring information exchange on consumer protection within the G20 between these annual events.

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3. Raising awareness about consumer protection amongst businesses, civil society groups and amongst consumers is an essential first step to improving consumer protection and therefore we welcome the proposal for the United Nations to recognise **World Consumer Protection Week** as a designated international week and urge member states to support the resolution at the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy on 9 and 10 July 2018.

CONSUMER PROTECTION IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

4. The first G20 Consumer Summit held in Berlin in 2017 recognised the rapid and far reaching impact that digital technology has had on the nature of consumption and the opportunities and challenges it has created for consumers. Under the theme of **“building a digital world consumers can trust”** a number of recommendations were discussed for how consumers could be better protected.
5. In 2017 the G20 Digital Ministers plus Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Singapore and Vietnam said in their statement, *“Trust and security are fundamental to the functioning of the digital economy; without them, uptake of digital technologies may be limited, undermining an important source of potential growth and social progress.”* They also recognised the importance of enforcing competition and consumer protection laws in the digital economy, which are conducive to market access, technological innovation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)s and the growth of the digital economy.
6. **We call on the G20 Ministers in charge of the Digital Economy to recommit to this aspiration when they meet under the Argentinian presidency on 24-25 August in Salta and commit to further working together, with the support of Consumers International and other relevant international organisations,** to deliver positive consumer outcomes through continued innovation and effective protection online.
7. We welcome the tools that have been developed in response to the discussion at the G20 Consumer Summit in 2017, to ensure effective responses to the challenges and opportunities facing consumers in the digital economy and society. In particular, we commend **Consumers International’s Digital Index: policies and initiatives for a digital world consumer can trust** and the **OECD’s Toolkit for Protecting Digital Consumers: a resource for G20 policy makers.**

PROTECTING CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL AGE

8. **We call on the G20 Digital Ministers to pay particular attention to the need to protect vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers** who because of age, gender, location etc may be less able to enjoy the benefits of digital technology and at greater risk of harm.

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9. In particular there is an urgent need for action to **protect children and young people in the digital age**. We recognise that children make up an estimated one third of internet users worldwide.¹
10. Important **work has been done by UNICEF, the OECD, the ITU and others** to protect children online and we recommend these initiatives to all stakeholders.
11. However important new challenges also need to be addressed. We are therefore calling on the G20 Digital Ministers to make **a new commitment to improve security, data protection and privacy of connected products and services that are marketed for children** and report back on these initiatives to the G20 Digital Ministers summit in 2019. This will seek to prevent children being put at risk as a result of products being hacked or data being accessed by a third party.
12. To support this commitment, we call on all G20 governments to **develop and where possible deliver appropriate but effective tools** including business advise and awareness raising, technical support, the development of standards and regulation to support this initiative over the next twelve months.
13. To support progress and co-operation, **we call on the G20 to support Consumers International and international organisations to bring together relevant stakeholders to raise the international profile of this challenge and exchange good practice and support international cooperation** on this topic.
14. We are also mindful of the need for more evidence and deliberation to support policy development in relation to **emerging digital issues**, such as compulsive behaviour, that may be affecting children and encourage all stakeholders to continue work that will help us understand and respond to these challenges.

PRODUCT SAFETY

15. We recognise that **protecting consumers from unsafe products** is a fundamental responsibility of consumer protection, and ensuring we meet this obligation requires us to respond to new challenges posed by global markets and supply chains and the development of new digital products.
16. We recognise the important role of **international standards** in establishing agreed benchmarks for safety and encourage all parties to engage with the standard setting process and adopt appropriate standards. We also recognise the efforts of international standard setting bodies to develop processes that enable standards to be developed at a speed and format that allows them to respond to the pace of progress in digital and international markets.
17. We also recognise **rapid alert systems** as an important tool in ensuring that authorities, businesses and consumers are informed and aware of products that pose a risk for consumers and recognise the important work done by the OECD to develop its Global Recalls portal and regional bodies to develop similar tools.
18. We encourage all authorities to make active use of these systems to ensure unsafe products are registered. We also support initiatives to support

¹ Livingstone, Carr and Byrne (2015)

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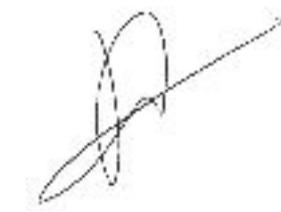
co-operation and link regional and international rapid alert systems, to give all authorities the information they need as efficiently as possible. We recognise the need for capacity building and training to expand the global reach and use of these systems

FOOD LOSS AND WASTE

19. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDOs), which came into force in 2016 with universal targets to be achieved by 2030, for Responsible Consumption and Production call for the efficient management of shared natural resources and the elimination of toxic waste and pollutants as vital elements in achieving this goal. It is also imperative to encourage industries, businesses and consumers to recycle and reduce waste, and to support developing countries in moving towards sustainable consumption patterns by 2030.
20. Furthermore, the consumption of a large proportion of the world's population remains insufficient to meet even their basic needs. In that context, it is important to half per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels to create more efficient production and supply chains. This can contribute to food security and lead to a more resource-efficient economy.
21. We therefore call for assessments of the impact of inappropriate production and consumption practices, with government actions including all relevant ministries as well as civil society, with special emphasis on education initiatives that provide the necessary tools for global awareness of this problem and the gradual resolution of its negative consequences for the world's population.



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