

## Day 2. Wednesday, 21 February 2024

8.30–9 a.m.

### Registration

9–11.00 a.m.

Format: Open session/hybrid

### Session III. Empowering consumers: improving access to redress and dispute resolution

Improving access to redress is essential for empowering consumers and ensuring a fair marketplace. It provides consumers with an efficient and viable means to address complaints, seek remedies, and obtain a sense of justice. By fostering trust and accountability, enhanced access to redress promotes consumer confidence and a level playing field for businesses.

This session focuses on empowering consumers by improving their access to effective redress and dispute resolution mechanisms. It will explore strategies for handling consumer complaints and ensuring transparency, fairness and efficiency in the resolution process. Discussions will cover the role of authorities in facilitating access to justice, emphasizing the significance of providing consumers with accessible and efficient avenues to seek redress, and fostering their confidence in the marketplace while safeguarding their rights. Participants will also share best practices on improving the transparency and effectiveness of complaint-handling processes, promoting fair settlements, and facilitating cross-border dispute resolution.

Member States will showcase their progress, case studies, best practices in developing and reinforcing comprehensive legal frameworks that empower consumers by improving their access to redress and complaint resolution. The discussions will highlight successful initiatives that have effectively addressed consumer complaints and provided efficient procedures for resolution.

#### Session coordinator: ESCWA

**Moderator:** Nathalie Khaled, Economic Affairs Officer, Coordinator of competition, consumer protection and national planning and development projects, ESCWA

#### Speakers:

- Amanda Flávio de Oliveira, Professor, University of Brasília
- Shafi Albalushi, Senior Consumer Protection Specialist, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Kingdom of Bahrain
- Entesar Abdulaal, Consumer Protection Director, Government Innovation Ambassador, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Kingdom of Bahrain
- Pedro Gaspar, Director-General for Consumer Affairs, Portugal

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thierry Bourgoignie, Professor of Law, Director, Research Group in International and Comparative Consumer Law, International Law Association Committee on International Protection of Consumers, Montreal</li> <li>• Jasser Ali Al-Shoumi, Senior Engineer, Conformity Department, GCC Standardization Organization</li> </ul> <p><b>Developments in member States</b></p> <p><b>Open discussion</b></p>
11.00–11.30 a.m.	<b>Coffee break</b>
11.30 a.m.–1.00 p.m. Format: Open session/Hybrid	<p><b>Session IV. Consumer protection in e-commerce and the digital market</b></p> <p>The consumer landscape has undergone a substantial transformation owing to the rapid expansion of global trade, e-commerce, and digital platforms. While these advancements have undoubtedly provided consumers with various advantages and conveniences, they have also given rise to novel challenges and risks. The growing complexity of products and services has resulted in issues such as information imbalance, unfair contract terms, and obstacles in dispute resolution, all posing challenges to consumers.</p> <p>This session will focus on addressing the unique challenges and risks faced by consumers in the digital realm, and the policies and strategies employed to overcome them. Discussions will cover topics such as information and education, data privacy, online security, the responsibility of online businesses, product safety, and enforcement against digital fraud and dark commercial patterns. Expert presentations will provide insights into emerging threats and effective strategies.</p> <p>Member States and policymakers will have the opportunity to discuss developments, share experiences, exchange best practices, and strategies for enhancing digital consumer protection in their respective countries.</p> <p><b>Session coordinator: UNCTAD</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Arnau Izaguerri Vila, Legal Officer, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mohamed Al Abdulla, Head of Financial Crimes Division, Ministry of Interior, Kingdom of Bahrain</li> <li>• Maram AlMahmeed, E-Commerce Director, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Kingdom of Bahrain</li> <li>• Christine Riefa, Professor, University of Reading, United Kingdom</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willard Mwemba, Director and Chief Executive Officer, COMESA Competition Commission</li> <li>• Robin Simpson, Expert (UNCTAD consultant) and former Consumers International expert</li> </ul> <p><b>Developments in member States</b></p> <p><b>Open discussion</b></p>
<p>1.00 p.m.–1.15 p.m.</p> <p>Format: Open session/Hybrid</p>	<p><b>Speakers will be honored by His Excellency the Minister of Industry and Commerce, Kingdom of Bahrain</b></p>
<p>1.15–1.45 p.m.</p> <p>Format: Open session/Hybrid</p>	<p><b>Closing session: Way forward on enhancing consumer protection in the Arab region</b></p> <p><b>Session coordinators: ESCWA and partners</b></p> <p>Participants will highlight the lessons learned and main intervention areas needed to advance consumer protection in the Arab region. The session will strive to bring about an agreement on recommendations for enhancing consumer protection policies and enforcement in member States. ESCWA and its partners will present their plans moving forward, highlighting the important role of international and regional cooperation in improving consumer protection.</p>
<p>1.45–2.45 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Lunch break</b></p>