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India Chairs the UNCTAD Consumer Protection Expert Group

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WHY IN NEWS

India is chairing the Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, held under UNCTAD at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from July 6 to 8, 2026.

For the first time, India presides over the premier global forum on consumer protection. As cross-border e-commerce, digital platforms and artificial intelligence reshape how people buy and are sometimes misled, India's turn in the chair places it at the centre of writing the world's consumer-protection rulebook, while showcasing its own reforms at home.

THE EVENT AND INDIA'S ROLE

The **Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy** is being held under the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** at the **Palais des Nations, Geneva**, from **July 6 to 8, 2026**. India is represented and chaired by **Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs**, who presides over the three-day deliberations and guides discussions among member states.

FEATURE	DETAIL
Event	Ujyari Current Affairs - ujyari.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS Ninth Session of the IGE on Consumer Protection Law and Policy
Parent body	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
Venue	Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
Dates	July 6 to 8, 2026
India's representative	Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs
Constituting framework	United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP)

What is the IGE?

The Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) is constituted under the **United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP)**, first adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1985 and revised in 2015. The IGE is the **principal intergovernmental platform** for cooperation and dialogue on consumer-protection law and policy. It brings together member states, international organisations, consumer-protection authorities, academia and civil society to review implementation of the UNGCP and shape emerging norms.

WHY INDIA'S CHAIRING MATTERS

India's chairing signals its leadership on the fast-moving frontiers of consumer protection: **cross-border e-commerce safeguards, product safety and dispute resolution**. It reflects both the scale of India's consumer market and the strength of its recent reforms.

India has cited concrete results, including its **National Consumer Helpline**, which it says facilitated refunds worth more than ₹91.77 crore across 36 sectors over 14 months by resolving over 1.47 lakh grievances before they reached litigation. This "pre-litigation resolution" model is exactly the kind of practical experience UNCTAD forums seek to share.

The Domestic Link: Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and the CCPA

India's international leadership rests on its domestic framework. The **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** (<https://ujyari.com/legislation/consumer-protection-act-2019/>) modernised consumer law by:

- Creating the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** to regulate matters relating to consumer rights, unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements, with powers to investigate and penalise.
- Recognising **e-commerce and direct selling** and introducing rules for online platforms.
- Introducing **product liability** and simplifying the three-tier District, State and National consumer commissions.

- Enabling action against **misleading advertisements** and celebrity endorsements.

The CCPA has since issued guidelines targeting **dark patterns** (deceptive online design that nudges consumers into unintended choices) and **greenwashing** (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/greenwashing/>) (misleading environmental claims), placing India among the more active jurisdictions on digital-era consumer harms.

THE DIGITAL-ERA AGENDA

Modern consumer protection has moved well beyond faulty goods. The key challenges now include:

EMERGING ISSUE	WHAT IT MEANS
Dark patterns	Manipulative interface design that tricks users into purchases or subscriptions
Greenwashing	False or exaggerated claims about a product's environmental benefits
Misleading advertisements	Deceptive claims, including by influencers and AI-generated content
Cross-border e-commerce	Redress (https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/redress/) when buyer and seller are in different countries
AI and algorithms	Opaque pricing, profiling and automated decision-making affecting consumers

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

India's chairmanship is both a recognition of its market weight and an opportunity to shape global norms in its own interest, particularly on cross-border e-commerce redress, where Indian consumers increasingly transact with foreign platforms. The way forward is to translate soft UNGCP guidelines into workable cooperation mechanisms, such as mutual recognition of consumer grievances and shared action against dark patterns and greenwashing, while exporting India's low-cost, pre-litigation helpline model. For India, aligning its digital consumer-protection standards with global norms strengthens both consumer trust and its standing in global economic governance.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2: Important international institutions, agencies and fora (UNCTAD), their structure and mandate (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/mandate/>); bilateral, regional and global groupings involving India; role of India in global governance.

GS Paper 3: Consumer protection in the digital economy and e-commerce; effects of liberalisation and technology on consumers; issues of product safety and misleading advertisements.

Prelims pointers:

- The **IGE on Consumer Protection** functions under **UNCTAD** and is constituted under the **United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP)**.
- **UNGCP** was adopted in 1985 and revised in 2015; the IGE is its principal review platform.
- India's chair: **Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs**; venue Palais des Nations, Geneva.
- Domestically: the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** created the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)**.
- CCPA guidelines address **dark patterns** and **greenwashing**.

Mains question: In an era of cross-border e-commerce and AI-driven marketing, discuss the challenges to consumer protection and how India's leadership at global fora such as UNCTAD can help address them. (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

The event: India chairs the Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, held under UNCTAD at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from July 6 to 8, 2026.

UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, established in 1964, headquartered in Geneva; deals with trade, investment and development, including consumer protection.

India's chair: Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs.

UNGCP: United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, adopted in 1985 and revised in 2015; the IGE is its principal intergovernmental review platform.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019: India's domestic law that created the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) and introduced product liability and rules for e-commerce.

CCPA: Central Consumer Protection Authority; has issued guidelines against dark patterns and greenwashing.

Dark patterns: Deceptive online design that manipulates consumer choices; greenwashing: misleading environmental claims about products.

Sources: *Business Standard* (<https://www.business-standard.com>), *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com>), *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in>), *UNCTAD* (<https://unctad.org>)

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