



Advancing Regional Integration
through Competitive Markets
and Empowered Consumers

15TH MARCH 2026
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WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY PRESS STATEMENT

“PROTECTING CONSUMERS THROUGH SAFER PRODUCTS”

Pursuant to its consumer protection mandate, the COMESA Competition and Consumer Commission (the Commission) joins the rest of the world in commemorating the World Consumer Rights Day which falls on 15 March. The focus of this year’s commemorations is on product safety. The Commission has elected to localize the theme to: “**Protecting Consumers Through Safer Products**”. The theme has been adopted in order to emphasize the essential role played by agencies entrusted with safeguarding consumers in the marketplace, the magnitude of the problem and the serious concerns and risks that unsafe products pose to our consumers.

As an institution mandated to enforce consumer protection laws in COMESA, comprising 21 Member States, the Commission is committed to promoting a fair and safe marketplace by ensuring that products supplied to consumers meet the required safety standards, holding businesses accountable for harmful or deceptive practices, and empowering consumers with the information they need to make informed choices.

In some of the sub-Saharan economies where the market is dumped with substandard and counterfeit products, it becomes essential for the regulatory framework to be robust and comprehensive. For example, it is noted that at least 100,000 people in Africa die every year from unsafe products. Up to 6.5% of total ICT products traded in the continent are fake and counterfeits causing fire hazards, economic loss, and health risks and generating 2.9 million tons of waste whose management and safe disposal is still not well developed. Therefore, only an airtight system of laws, standards, and enforcement mechanisms can effectively deter the supply of unsafe products and protect consumers from the harm posed by such goods.

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In addition, the advent of digital markets has not made consumers any safer. It is notable that digital marketplaces have grown rapidly across Africa and globally, becoming central hubs for consumer transactions and economic activity. Notably, the Digital market size in Africa was estimated at USD30.24 billion in 2025 and is expected to reach USD63.31 billion by 2030 at a growth rate of 15.9%. Online platforms now host millions of third-party sellers and facilitate transactions worth billions of dollars each year. This explosive growth, while beneficial for consumer access and market expansion, has also introduced significant product-safety risks, such as fake or manipulated reviews; misleading product descriptions; inapplicable and lack of safety certifications; lack of manufacturer details, product verification limitations, cyber security risks, limited product guarantees, deception, delivery and return challenges, deepfakes, privacy invasion and public dehumanization. This therefore calls for the relevant consumer protection authorities to increase surveillance and enhance enforcement of the law both in traditional and digital platforms to ensure that online and physical consumers are protected equally.

Noting the gravity that unsafe products can have on consumers including death, the Commission amended and expanded its legal framework. The COMESA Competition and Consumer Protection Regulations of 2025 expanded the mandate of the Commission on product safety to include:

- Prohibition of the supply of products that significantly harm the environment.
- Introduction of requirements on product information and labelling within the Common Market to ensure transparency and informed choices.
- Prohibition of the supply of services that do not meet expected quality or safety standards; and
- Extension of the regulation to the digital space by prohibiting harmful digital content.

Let me make it clear, consumers are the very essence of markets and the ultimate bedrock of the entire system of economies. The world recalls that it has occasionally witnessed economic disasters when consumer confidence in the market is eroded. It is incontrovertible that markets replete with unsafe products that cause injury and death would result in loss of consumer confidence with far reaching consequences for the well being of economies.

In this regard the Commission is in the process of implementing a mechanism for rapid tracking and recalling of unsafe products within the COMESA region. Further, the Commission is working with Member States through the COMESA Consumer Protection Committee to promote regular and timely information sharing, enhance cross border

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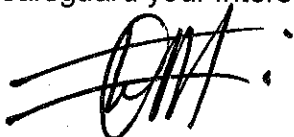
collaboration and ensure that unsafe products identified in one country are removed from other countries where they are supplied in COMESA.

The Commission is urging businesses to prioritize compliance to the Regulations and ensure that their products meet established safety standards before reaching consumers. The public is also encouraged to remain vigilant, report unsafe products, and seek information before making purchases. Protecting consumers through safer products is a shared responsibility, and when safety becomes a priority at every stage of production and distribution, markets become fairer, businesses become more competitive, and consumers gain the confidence they deserve.

The Commission will continue to intensify market surveillance, collaborate with national and regional regulators, and engage with stakeholders to promote a culture of safety, and fairness to the consumer. Lastly, let me sound a warning to businesses; the Commission shall as it has always done, be relentless in ensuring that consumers are protected from unsafe products. The Commission shall, therefore, punish to the extent permissible at law all undertakings involved in this dangerous enterprise of supplying unsafe products.

We are Keenly Watching!

After all is written, I wish all human beings on the planet, for we are all consumers an informative and meaningful World Consumer Rights Day, full of hope and confidence that we as consumers authorities shall safeguard your interests and rights.



**Dr Willard Mwemba
Chief Executive Officer**

COMESA Competition and Consumer Commission