

RESOLUTIONS OF THE PAN AFRICAN FORUM ON CONSUMER PROTECTION

From 21 to 23 July 2015, was held in N'djamena, Republic of Chad, the Pan-African Forum on Consumer Protection, on the initiative of the Association for the Defense of Consumer Rights (ADC Chad), in partnership with the international Scientific Committee of the Forum consisting of:

- Mr. Alphonse Issi, President of the National Consumer Movement (MNT), Cameroon
- Mr. Daniel DA, Consumers League Burkina Faso (LCB)
- Mr. Daouda Elhadj Adam, Secretary General of the Association of Consumers, Chad (ADC Chad)
- Mr. Amadou Kanoute, Executive Director of the Pan-African Institute for Consumer Citizenship and Development, Senegal (CICODEV Africa)
- Mr. Nouri Mahamane Association for the Defense of Consumer Rights Niger, (ADDC)
- Mrs. Salimata Diarra, President of the Consumers Association of Mali (ASCOMA) Mali
- Mr. Muyunda ILILUNGA, President of Zambian Consumers Association (ZACA)
- Mr. John Kapito, Consumers Association of Malawi (CAMA)
- Mr. KOKOU Gagalo, Secretary General of the Togolese Consumers Association (ATC) Togo
- Mr. Noel Nkurunziza, President of the Burundi Consumers' Association (ABUCO).
- Mr. Doukoua Gode, President of the Federation of Consumer Associations of Cote d'Ivoire
- Mr. Mermans BABOUNGA Ngondo, President of the Observatory of Consumer Rights, Congo Brazzaville
- Mr. Samir EL JAAFARI President of ATLAS-SAIS Morocco.

About sixty participants from 19 countries and government, inter-governmental agencies, and international NGOs participated to the Forum. The list of participants is attached.

The Forum has also received support from several institutions namely the Government of Chad and the International Organization of Francophonie.

After two days of discussions and deliberations on the following topics:

- Access to basic social services
- The fight against high prices
- Universal access to telecommunications,
- Quality standards, regulations and food control procedures,
- Food sovereignty, climate change, land grabbing,
- Citizen's control of government action and budget transparency.

We, members and leaders of African consumer associations present and participating at the Forum have identified the following issues we consider as challenges to African consumers and have adopted the following resolutions to address them:

- **Access to basic social services:**

Energy: In Africa, electricity coverage rate is around 25%, despite a huge potential of gas reserves, of hydropower, sun and wind. Consumers in our countries still face four challenges: (i) Financial and geographic accessibility for disadvantaged consumers, (ii) Availability, (iii) Sustainability namely through the diversification of energy sources and (iv) Independence and capacity of the sector regulators.

Health: Between 60 and 90% of citizen-consumers in our countries do not have any coverage against health risks. In view of the failure of public service to provide coverage against health risks for the majority of African citizens despite the centrality of health in development policies, African Heads of States and Governments at the AU Summit in Abuja in 2001 committed to invest 15% of their national budgets in health. Very few have achieved this at the deadline set in 2015.

In view of the challenges outlined above, the participants to the Forum have resolved to conduct national and regional campaigns to:

- ❖ Call on African decision makers to establish and implement transparent policies that promote equity and equality of citizens in access to such essential basic services like energy and health at national and regional level.
- ❖ Call on our decision makers to invest in the diversification and sustainability of energy sources to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels;
- ❖ Call for the independence of the electricity regulators for them to carry out their task independently; free from any political interference or threat on their career from the other stakeholders of the sector;
- ❖ Express our appreciation and support the African States that have introduced policies such as the Universal Health Coverage
- ❖ Call on other countries to follow suit in order to facilitate citizens' access to essential health services.

- **The fight against high prices**

Many of our governments have put in place structures to fight against high prices in essential commodities and services

However, the environment in most African countries is marked by: the liberalization of the economy, weak capacity of government departments in charge of regulating markets and competition, weak production and management of essential commodities, the low supply of social housing, weak economic and social governance, weak capacity of consumer associations, citizens' ignorance of their rights and responsibilities as consumers. All these factors undermine efforts to fight against high prices which in turn exclude the majority of African consumers from access to essential goods and services.

To face these challenges, we have resolved to :

- ❖ Deploy and step up our advocacy actions to call for and support capacity building for regulatory bodies and competition commissions in our countries and at regional level
- ❖ Deploy and step up our awareness raising and consumer education actions to encourage the emergence of an active citizenship, ready to claim investments in sectors that can have an impact on reducing the cost of living, such as social housing, health, energy, water and sanitation, etc.

- **Universal access to telecommunications.**

Telecommunications are now one of the driving forces of our economies. The contribution of this sector can however be increased for an inclusive growth of our economies and the promotion of national integration.

Our discussions lead to the finding of the defective network quality and poor service in many countries, the very low geographical coverage of the country by operators who focus in areas where demand is solvent, the lack of transparency in billing, weak regulation agencies and lack of effective competition in the sector

Facing these challenges, we are committed to:

- ❖ Develop a thorough understanding of the texts governing the telecommunications sector and postal services and ensure citizens-consumers also do the same ;
- ❖ Request regulatory agencies and officials at regional and national level to implement policies that promote competition in the telecommunications sector, including the use of the portability of mobile phone numbers;
- ❖ Urge national authorities to monitor the sector by conducting regular surveys and publishing the results of these surveys on quality of service, rates, geographical coverage in order to spur and maintain a competitive environment in the sector
- ❖ Request the establishment of a fund for universal access to telecommunications targeting disadvantaged areas and citizens and especially young people's access to the internet;
- ❖ Call for the involvement and representation of consumers in decision making bodies that govern these different institutions and bodies;
- ❖ Fight cybercrime with our governments namely in supporting user identification programs

- **Quality standards, food control procedures, promotion of local products.**

The quality and safety of food products remain a major concern of consumers in our countries.

It is the same for consumption of local products, which suffer from a lack of promotion, exposing our countries to dependence on imports that undermine our local production capacity while using up a lot of our resources spent outside our countries.

Our deliberations during the two days have shown that in many African countries spending on imported goods can reach up to 30% of the household food budget; while highly nutritious local products are available in our countries but suffer from lack of promotion.

Noting these challenges, we have resolved to urge our governments to:

- ❖ Promote quality infrastructure programs at both national and regional levels;
- ❖ Ensure the involvement of consumers in formulating quality standards;
- ❖ Develop programs to promote local products that can substitute for imported products.

- **Food sovereignty, climate change and land-grabbing**

The lack of control of our production and consumption patterns undermines our ability to achieve food sovereignty in our countries.

Meanwhile, climate change due to warming of 2 ° of climate could increase food and nutrition insecurity of 90% especially in developing countries by 2050.

Noting these challenges, we are committed to:

- ❖ Encourage and develop partnerships with organizations such as AFSA – The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa- to promote the emergence of short distribution channels for consumer products, sustainable management and production models in agriculture, fisheries, livestock, land governance, water resources;
- ❖ Urge our governments to adopt production and energy consumption models that are less dependent on fossil energies, to develop energy policies and energy mix giving more room to renewables, to energy efficiency in housing, in public institutions, in public lighting and to promote more energy efficient transport systems.

- **Citizen control of government action**

In most of our countries, our organizations are facing a deficit of democracy that excludes them from participating in public policy formulation processes.

We are also facing internal challenges in resource mobilization; building our technical and institutional capacities. This harms the professionalization of our organizations and our efforts.

We are facing the challenge of budget transparency in our countries and cannot always assess the effectiveness and efficiency in the management of our national budget resources by our governments.

Facing these challenges, we are committed to:

- ❖ Working with similar organizations on budget transparency, monitoring of natural resources and particularly extractive industries;
- ❖ Urging and supporting our governments to generate adequate financial resources to fund basic social services;
- ❖ Working with parliamentarians to monitor the effectiveness of the texts guaranteeing social protection for poor consumers and voted on by our national assemblies;
- ❖ Protecting leaders of consumer groups that could be threatened by justice in their country in the conduct of their mission of consumer protection;
- ❖ Urging Consumers International to set up a mechanism to support leaders and members of consumer associations that may be under threats;
- ❖ Urging African Governments to achieve Regional integration and free movement of people and goods in our regional areas;
- ❖ Undertake legal actions to defend our just causes for the benefit of consumers;
- ❖ Approaching technical and financial partners supportive of our cause to support us in strengthening our capacity for action and independence.
- ❖ Maintain the independence of our organizations from political interference.

- **The Continental and Pan-African framework for consultation and action for consumer protection.**

The AFRICAN UNION space which gathers today more than one billion consumers, and in 2020, is today a significant economic issue.

The economic integration underway in different sub regions of the continent and at continental level will result in opening borders, causing rapid flow of consumption products within the continent. This African integration will necessarily induce a consumer community submitted to the same rules and the same civic contributions.

The need for African Continent Consumer organizations to unite their efforts with a view to better defend the interests of all consumers in the Continent is required. Given these challenges:

1) We decide to create this day, July 23, 2015 in Ndjamen, a nonprofit and nongovernmental continental organization, called the AFRICAN UNION FOR CONSUMERS (AUC)

2) We are committed to:

Getting involved in the success of the AFRICAN UNION FOR CONSUMERS (AUC) a non profit and non-governmental continental organization, founded in Ndjamen on the sidelines of the Pan-African Forum of Ndjamen.

- ❖ Promoting horizontal cooperation between Consumers organizations in Africa in monitoring circulation of consumer products;
Supporting implementation of regional integration policies through intergovernmental institutions such as the African Union;
- ❖ Working for the Union of all African Consumer Organizations in order to boost the welfare of consumers in the Continent at this time of globalization.
Regularly paying membership fees and annual fees

Done in N'Djamena, July 23, 2015

The participants