

## What is Consumers International?

Consumers International (CI) is the world federation of consumer groups that, working together with its members, serves as the only independent and authoritative global voice for consumers.

With over 220 member organisations in 115 countries, CI is building a powerful international movement to help protect and empower consumers everywhere.

Founded in 1960, the organisation is now needed more than ever. This modern movement is essential to secure a fair safe and sustainable future for consumers in a global marketplace increasingly dominated by international corporations.

Consumers International is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, company number 4337865, and registered charity number 1122155.

## What is CI's vision?

CI is working to put the rights of consumers at the heart of decision-making.

CI's vision is a world where everyone has access to safe and sustainable goods and services. Where the strength of the collective power is used for the good of consumers throughout the world.

Read more and download the CI information leaflet and Strategic Plan brochure in [Media Resources](#).

## The development of consumer rights

On 15 March 1962 former US President John F. Kennedy said:

*'Consumers by definition include us all. They are the largest economic group, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Yet they are the only important group... whose views are often not heard.'*

He went on set out the following four basic consumer rights to:

- Safety
- Information
- Choice
- Be heard.

In recent years the consumer movement under the guidance of Consumers International added four more rights and they include the rights to:

- The satisfaction of basic needs
- Redress
- Education
- A healthy environment.

## World Consumer Rights Day

[World Consumer Rights Day \(WCRD\)](#) is an annual occasion for celebration and solidarity within the international consumer movement.

In commemoration of President Kennedy's speech, WCRD was first observed on 15 March 1983 and has become an important occasion for mobilising citizen action.

Consumer organisations around the world use materials produced by Consumers International to generate local initiatives and media coverage for their work over the coming years.

## How are consumer rights defined?

The basic consumer rights are:

- **The right to satisfaction of basic needs** - to have access to basic, essential goods and services; adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, public utilities, water and sanitation.
- **The right to safety** - to be protected against products, production processes and services, which are hazardous to health or life.
- **The right to be informed** - to be given the facts needed to make an informed choice, and to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising and labelling.
- **The right to choose** - to be able to select from a range of products and services, offered at competitive prices with an assurance of satisfactory quality.
- **The right to be heard** - to have consumer interests represented in the making and execution of government policy, and in the development of products and services.
- **The right to redress** - to receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.

- **The right to consumer education** - to acquire knowledge and skills needed to make informed, confident choices about goods and services, while being aware of basic consumer rights and responsibilities and how to act on them.
- **The right to a healthy environment** -to live and work in an environment that is non-threatening to the well being of present and future generations.

## How is CI governed?

CI is a democratic organisation governed by a Council (board), elected by full members at CI World Congress, held every three years.

The Council consists of a President, elected directly, and 19 members. The Council in turn appoints an eight-member Executive to which some responsibilities are delegated. Staff managed by the Director General, who reports to the Council, carries out CI's work. CI is a founding signatory of the [International NGO Accountability Charter](#) and is fully committed to its principles of legitimacy, transparency and accountability.

These principles lie at the heart CI is governed and the way the organisation campaigns.

CI's values include:

- The highest standards of ethical conduct
- Independence from business, government and party politics
- Mutual solidarity and among CI members
- Integrity, transparency and accountability
- Inclusiveness.

## Campaigns and programmes

CI campaigns on the international issues that matter to consumers everywhere. This means achieving real changes in government policy and corporate behaviour while raising awareness of consumer rights and responsibilities.

In campaigning for the rights of consumers across the world, CI seeks to hold corporations to account and demands government action to put consumer concerns first.

To this end, CI is committed to acting as a global watchdog: campaigning against any behaviour that threatens, ignores or abuses the principles of consumer protection.

CI is doing this by:

- Working with national member organisations to influence governments, highlight marketplace abuses and raise grass roots support.
- Pressing consumer concerns through official representation global bodies such as the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), International Organization of Standardization (ISO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- Raising awareness about purchasing choices through clear, engaging and accessible communication.

### Regional and international representation

Consumers International has official representation on many global bodies, including:

- United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and related United Nations agencies and commissions
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Codex Alimentarius Commission
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

CI is also active at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), although this does not have formal accreditation arrangements.

At the regional and sub-regional levels it represents consumers at, among others the:

- United Nations regional Economic Commissions
- Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO)
- Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO)
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Representation at the European Commission is handled by the Bureau Européen des Union de Consommateurs (BEUC), an affiliated member of CI with which it liaises closely.

### Donors and supporters

Over one third of CI's income comes from membership fees.

The remainder is made up of grants from governments, multilateral agencies, non-governmental organisations and trusts and foundations.

CI's annual turnover is approximately US\$ 5,500,000.