

World Consumer Rights Day 2018

Statement Issue by Mr. Kofi Kapito, the Chief Executive Officer of Consumer Protection Agency (CPA)

On behalf Ghanaian Consumers

Fellow Ghanaians, over the past ten years, there has been various attempts by government through the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) to get to cabinet the draft Consumer Protection Law. Four presidents have come and gone yet the progress has painstakingly been slow. Veteran consumer protection advocate Mr. Kofi Kapito has appeared on almost every electronic media in the country to advocate for the passage of the law. Today as the world marks World Consumer Rights Day, Ghanaian consumers have nothing to celebrate for.

It is discouragingly disheartening the trotto pace at which government is handling the process. The seemingly lack of interest in the law by government can be seen to have stalled the progress.

In the absence of the consumer protection law, it makes it difficult to do consumer advocacy and consumer protection in the country. Because the country lacks the enabling laws for consumer protection, Ghana has literally become the junkyard for inferior goods from Asia. As you make your way to shops across the country, one notice that you will come across is: **GOODS SOLD ARE NOT RETURNABLE**. For a manufacturer or merchant to say goods sold are not returnable, it means that the goods are inferior and are not fit for purpose.

Though, there are limited provisions in some legislations like the PURC Act 538, NCA 524, Act, and FDA that protect the Ghanaian consumers. However, these provisions are scattered in over 40 statutes and it is even difficult for a smart lawyer to find them.

There have been a lot of nice talks about Consumer Protection Law. In numerous occasions, government has told Ghanaians that the law would be enacted soon. To the surprise of the Ghanaian consumer, “soon” has become “never”.

WHAT THE NPP PROMISED GHANAIS

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) then in opposition promised Ghanaians that they would pass the Law. For a quick reference, refer to Chapter Two, Section XII, page 31, of the party manifesto and it reads:

CONSUMER PROTECTION

To protect Ghanaians from inferior goods, products, and services, we will: a. facilitate the passage of a Consumer Protection Law, and b. strengthen the operations of the Ghana Standards Authority (GSA).

The word “consumer” appeared in 7 times in the NPP Manifesto.

Regrettably, with more than 15 months in power, the current administration has not moved any step further from where the document was.

SOME COUNTRIES IN AFRICA WITH CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW

Burkina Faso	Gambia	Benin
Rwanda	Mali	Egypt
Cameroun	Nigeria	Kenya
Côte d’Ivoire	Senegal	Tanzania

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

Since the current administration was inaugurated, a lot of new laws have been passed. Majority of these laws were not inherited from the previous administration. One would expect that Laws that were bequeathed by the previous administration, having passed the cabinet approval would have been given the needed priority. The draft Consumer Protection Law that was approved by the previous cabinet had to be recalled back to the MOTI and AG’s Department for further work. It appears to us that patchwork on the law is taking longer than expected.

We are not mistaken if we say that the passage of the law clearly not a priority of the current power brokers.

But if there is anything at all, government is required to act on the good interest of the people and protect them. Protecting Ghanaians are not only about men-in-uniform. It is not about having police and the military doing patrols, but, as the name suggests: it is in **CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW.**

THE CURRENT DRAFT CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW

As I speak to you now, the draft Consumer Protection Law which was sponsored by the Consumer Protection Agency has gathered dust at the Attorney General’s Department.

DEMAND FROM GOVERNMENT

As Ghana joins the world to mark World Consumer Rights Day, Consumer Protection Agency (CPA), acting on behalf of Ghanaians consumers and our partner, CUTS Ghana is asking the government to

Give us a timeline towards the passage of the law.

OPERATION 20,000 SIGNATORIES: CHANGE.ORG

Ghana's population now is about 29 million. Over the years, there have been few consumer protection activists. Some have come and gone. Today, when you mention consumer protection in Ghana or google it, at least I appear on the search results. But I want everyone to know that consumer protection is not about me-Kapito as a person. It is about every Ghanaian which includes the President, Vice, Speaker of Parliament, and the Chief Justice. We are all consumers. We all go to Accra and Kumasi Mall. We all shop at the Melcoms and the Shoprites. We all buy Unilever and Nestle products. We all consume electricity from the ECG, and water from Ghana Water Company. We may have different political and religious affiliations but what unites us as a people is that we are all CONSUMERS.

So today, we are launching a petition to raise twenty thousand (20,000) signatories to petition the government of the Republic of Ghana to act now.

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY: To finalize the document

ATTORNEY GENERAL DEPARTMENT: To finalize the drafting

CABINET: To approve for Parliament

PARLIAMENT: To pass the Consumer Protection Law before the year ends

MINISTRY OF FINANCE: To provide every financial considerations required.

This is what we are asking government to do: nothing more nothing less.

If we do not see any measurable progress after some time, Ghanaian consumers would have nothing to do than to picket at the Attorney Generals Department and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. We hope we will go there!

In conclusion, Ghana cannot wait any further for the Consumer Protection Law. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr “the time is always right to do the right thing.” and the time is now. I want you all to share the link via social media so that every Ghanaian can sign this petition. Once we get the numbers, it would let government to know that Ghanaians all over are demanding for the passage of the law.

My request to the media houses here kindly let your editors put the story on front page. When it receives attention from policy makers and we win, we all win together.

EDITORS NOTE:

World Consumer Rights 2018 Celebration is collaboration between the Consumer Protection Agency (CPA) and CUTS Ghana