



Remarks Of Acting Commissioner Hardin Ratshisusu at the 2026 World Consumer Rights Day Commemoration in Limpopo (University of Limpopo)

13 MARCH 2026

Thank you, programme Director.

Good morning.

Let me thank our hosts for a well organised World Consumer Rights Day commemoration.

Yesterday the host from the University of Limpopo was boasting that after this event there will be no other that will surpass this particular one.

I do not know if last year's hosts Mpumalanga will agree to this. And next year's hosts, the Northern Cape have told me we should expect an even bigger event.

This talks to how South African authorities value consumer rights and consumer welfare.

Deputy Minister, Honourable Zuko Godlimpi

MEC for Economic Development in Limpopo, Honourable Tshitereke Matibe

HOD: Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Dr Matodzi Rathumbu

Vice-Chancellor and Principal: University of Limpopo Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele or Deputy Vice Chancellor: University of Pretoria Prof Richard Madadzhe

Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality, Cllr Makoro John Mpe

Executive Mayor of Capricorn District, Cllr Mamedupi Teffo

Chief Director for Policy and Regulation at the dtic, Mr Marumo Nkomo

Director of the School of Law at the University of Limpopo, Adv. Mashele Rapatsa

Representative of the House of Traditional Leaders

Heads of regulators, technical infrastructure institutions and ombuds;

Distinguished representatives of consumer protection bodies and regulatory authorities,

Members of the Consumer Protection Forum

Members of the media,

Students;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

All protocol observed.

Dumelang, Abuxeni, Ndi matsheleli.

We have gathered here to commemorate World Consumer Rights Day in this beautiful province of Limpopo (and not Lipompo as I hear some say).

It is Limpopo, the province known for its warm hospitality, exquisite tourism spots, agriculture, mining and many more.

This year's theme, "Turning the tide against unfair business practices" shows the resolve of regulators, technical infrastructure institutions and ombuds to tackle practices in the market that undermine consumer rights. This theme fits into the global theme, "Safe Products, Confident Consumers", which we fully embrace and support.

Today, I would like to unpack what this theme means in practical terms, why it matters, and what actions are required to ensure that consumer rights are not only recognised but actively protected.

The resolve of putting the consumer first was reignited on 15 December 2025 as the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution establishing the first-ever United Nations Principles on Consumer Product Safety. South Africa together with Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, Spain, and Sweden sponsored the resolution.

This is a decisive response to growing global risks posed by unsafe consumer products, particularly in the context of cross-border and online trade. The principles provide a global framework to strengthen product safety, promote international cooperation, and enhance consumer protection across markets.

What is left now is for UN member states to implement these principles, as it is through a coherent and coordinated framework that we can ensure consumers are adequately protected.

The pressures and exploitation consumers face require all regulatory authorities to work in unison, with a common goal of shielding consumers from exploitation.

When South Africa hosted the G20 last year, the platform presented an opportunity to place the principles of solidarity, equality and sustainability on the global agenda.

Together with **the dtic**, the NCC hosted a G20 webinar on developments in consumer protection, with a focus on product safety and digital markets, bringing together G20 regulators, international organisations, industry representatives and legal experts. South Africa is at the table, and we should always strive for excellence locally, for influence globally.

The landscape is also changing, and we should be agile.

For instance, advances in digital markets, e-commerce and artificial intelligence require regulators to adapt very quickly.

Failing to adapt to these changes will not only weaken regulation but also leave consumers vulnerable to exploitation.

I am however encouraged with work of regulators in this respect, but we can coordinate more and better.

Across the globe and within our own economy, consumers are confronted with increasingly complex products, services, and contractual arrangements.

While innovation and market expansion create opportunities for economic growth, these market features can also create an environment where unfair practices prevail if they are not properly regulated.

Unfair business practices occur when businesses exploit their position of power to take advantage of consumers. These practices may include:

- Misleading advertising and exaggerated product claims;
- Hidden fees and non-transparent pricing structures;
- Unfair contract terms that place excessive obligations on consumers;
- Failure to honour warranties, refunds, or product guarantees;
- The sale of defective or unsafe goods; and

- Aggressive or deceptive sales techniques.

Such conduct undermines consumer trust and distorts the principles of fair competition.

As markets evolve, so too do the forms of unfair business practices.

We have also witnessed an unprecedented amount of product recalls, an increase in consumer complaints in the automotive sector, the rising prevalence of expired foods particularly in informal retail and concerns around pricing of goods and services.

There is also a spotlight on the food value chain. For instance, the South African Human Rights Commission has commenced a National Inquiry into Food Systems of South Africa. The NCC, the Competition Commission and **the dtic** will be making submissions along other stakeholders.

Distinguished guests, on this World Consumer Rights Day 2026, we reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding consumers and protecting the integrity of our economy.

The events and activities organised by various entities, provincial offices, and law enforcement agencies across the Limpopo Province demonstrate the importance of engaging directly with communities. These initiatives not only allow us to interact with consumers but also enable us to educate them about their rights and about product safety.

There will be no economy without a thriving consumer market.

It is therefore important that businesses, irrespective of size, respect consumer rights in their dealings with consumers.

During this week, numerous public education and awareness initiatives were conducted across communities in the Vhembe District Municipality, Capricorn District Municipality, and Mopani District Municipality.

In addition, investigation and enforcement initiatives were undertaken to ensure that businesses operating in these areas comply with consumer protection laws.

There are success stories of the Consumer Prevention Forum, but these need to be documented and accessible to the public.

For instance, earlier this year I presented before the Portfolio Committee on Trade, Industry and Competition and highlighted the collective impact of the NCC, MIOSA and CGSSO. The estimated value of consumer redress that will be achieved in the financial year will be around R150 million, which mirrors amounts achieved in the 2022/25 financial year.

In this way, we can build confidence in the regulatory ecosystem, by demonstrating the actual impact of our activities.

I would like to share with you some of the bold ideas' worth considering:

- Our country faces a huge challenge of illicit trade. It is estimated that at least R100 billion is lost to illicit trade. To tackle this, we are proposing to **the dtic** a regulation for tracking and tracing goods, to ensure goods sold in the marketplace are barcoded and can be tracked from source. We shall need to work very closely with the private sector through platforms such as the Dinks Federation South Africa and the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa.
- Rethinking collaboration: SABS and NRCS, have together with ITAC, SANAS, NMISA and NCC, conceptualised a high-level structure to ensure a coordinated and quick response to technical infrastructure and trade issues that have a material impact on the economy.
- Think of regulatory interventions that would demonstrably contribute to current policy priorities.
- Draw in traditional leaders to reach out to underprivileged communities. These are communities that are vulnerable and need the advocacy the most.

As we chart a path forward, we should target those enforcement activities and advocacy that would have the greatest impact on consumer welfare and contribute to the growth and development of our economy.

This would align with the theme of this year's World Consumer Rights Day.

Finally, this year we shall be marking 15 years of consumer protection in South Africa under the new legal framework, following the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act in 2008 and the subsequent establishment of the National Consumer Commission in 2011. Watch this space for more activities in this regard.