

# UNITED NATIONS GUIDELINES FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION

## **Section G. Promotion of Sustainable Consumption**

*(Note: The Guidelines we wish to focus on have been highlighted in bold)*

42. Sustainable consumption includes meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

43. Responsibility for sustainable consumption is shared by all members and organizations of society, with informed consumers, Government, business, labour organizations, and consumer and environmental organizations playing particularly important roles. Informed consumers have an essential role in promoting consumption that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, including through the effects of their choices on producers. Governments should promote the development and implementation of policies for sustainable consumption and the integration of those policies with other public policies. Government policy making should be conducted in consultation with business, consumer and environmental organizations, and other concerned groups. Business has a responsibility for promoting sustainable consumption through the design, production and distribution of goods and services. Consumer and environmental organizations have a responsibility for promoting public participation and debate on sustainable consumption, for informing consumers, and for working with Government and business towards sustainable consumption.

44. Governments, in partnership with business and relevant organizations of civil society, should develop and implement strategies that promote sustainable consumption through a mix of policies that could include regulations; economic and social instruments; sectoral policies in such areas as land use, transport, energy and housing; information programmes to raise awareness of the impact of consumption patterns; removal of subsidies that promote unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; and promotion of sector-specific environmental-management best practices.

**45. Governments should encourage the design, development and use of products and services that are safe and energy and resource efficient, considering their full life-cycle impacts. Governments should encourage recycling programmes that encourage consumers to both recycle wastes and purchase recycled products.**

46. Governments should promote the development and use of national and international environmental health and safety standards for products and services; such standards should not result in disguised barriers to trade.

**47. Governments should encourage impartial environmental testing of products.**

48. Governments should safely manage environmentally harmful uses of substances and encourage the development of environmentally sound alternatives for such uses. New potentially hazardous substances should be evaluated on a scientific basis for their long-term environmental impact prior to distribution.

49. Governments should promote awareness of the health-related benefits of sustainable consumption and production patterns, bearing in mind both direct effects on individual health and collective effects through environmental protection.

**50. Governments, in partnership with the private sector and other relevant organizations, should encourage the transformation of unsustainable consumption patterns through the development and**

**use of new environmentally sound products and services and new technologies, including information and communication technologies, that can meet consumer needs while reducing pollution and depletion of natural resources.**

**51. Governments are encouraged to create or strengthen effective regulatory mechanisms for the protection of consumers, including aspects of sustainable consumption.**

**52. Governments should consider a range of economic instruments, such as fiscal instruments and internalization of environmental costs, to promote sustainable consumption, taking into account social needs, the need for disincentives for unsustainable practices and incentives for more sustainable practices, while avoiding potential negative effects for market access, in particular for developing countries.**

**53. Governments, in cooperation with business and other relevant groups, should develop indicators, methodologies and databases for measuring progress towards sustainable consumption at all levels. This information should be publicly available.**

**54. Governments and international agencies should take the lead in introducing sustainable practices in their own operations, in particular through their procurement policies. Government procurement, as appropriate, should encourage development and use of environmentally sound products and services.**

**55. Governments and other relevant organizations should promote research on consumer behaviour related to environmental damage in order to identify ways to make consumption patterns more sustainable.**

The full version of the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection can be found at:  
<http://www.unep.it/pc/sustain/guidelines/un-guidelines.htm>