

**Speaking Notes**  
**Inaugural Session of the 7Up4 Final Meeting**  
**6<sup>th</sup> August 2010, Dakar**  
**PRADEEP S MEHTA, Secretary General, CUTS**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives us a lot of pleasure to welcome you all to this final conference of the 7Up4 project that CUTS has been implementing in seven countries of West Africa, in cooperation with our **seven partner organisations** (all of who are represented in this room); and with support from the **Department for International Development (UK), the International Development Research Centre (Canada) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Sweden)**.

We thank you all for having **accepted our invitation** to be with us in this **beautiful and vibrant city of Dakar**; and give us an opportunity to discuss with you the project findings to trace the path forward for competition reforms in West Africa and indeed in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

DfID, IDRC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sweden) have been long-time supporters of our on trade and competition reforms in developing countries, and we are extremely pleased to see our colleagues from DfID and IDRC here. Unfortunately, our friends from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Sweden) were unable to join us. We also recognise the **presence of a number of international experts on competition policy issues** here; and the large contingent of **scholars and practitioners on competition policy and law issues from the continent**, who have and are likely to continue being the torch-bearers of pro-competition market reforms in their respective countries.

The 7Up4 project has been implemented by CUTS since June 2008 in seven countries of the ECOWAS – **BURKINA FASO, THE GAMBIA, GHANA, MALI, NIGERIA, SENEGAL and TOGO**. In addition to being able to produce **baseline information** about the state of competition (in specific sectors) in these seven countries, the project has helped ‘key actors’ in each country **better appreciate benefits from competitive markets** for achieving growth and development. **Civil society partners** of CUTS, responsible for implementing this project in their respective countries have emerged as **pioneers on competition policy** and law issues in their countries – and some of them have already developed an **active institutional work programme** on competition policy and law issues for the future.

Government departments in charge of competition and competition agencies have gained confidence and visibility, and found partners among the civil society to take the national competition agenda forward in their respective countries. Sector regulators have started to realise how critical a role they play in the process of promoting competition for achieving consumer welfare in key sectors. The media has also started to pick-up issues related to competition (or the lack of it). The project has contributed to evolving **a more conducive**

**environment** for the evolution and effective enforcement of competition policy and law in the countries.

There is need to continue working on competition policy and law issues, from a **holistic perspective** in these countries/region. CUTS has future plans and is confident to continue working on competition and consumer protection issues in the region. One of the purposes of this conference, and the wide-scale dissemination that would follow is to pursue the international development community to take cognisance of the demand on the ground to work on competition policy and law issues – as it has direct implications for growth and welfare gains of a large majority of citizens in these countries.

**The idea is to look at competition reforms as a means to an end and not an end in itself!**

**CUTS, its civil society partners, inter-governmental organisations and development partners** would need to combine forces to address certain issues that would help the 7Up4 countries move forward in their pursuit to promote a healthy competition culture.

These issues include:

- Greater political buy-in and attention towards promoting competition in the interest of national development
- Continued stakeholder interest on issues related to competition reforms
- Long-term international support for ‘young and inexperienced’ competition authorities
- Curbing vested interests and political interference in the functioning of competition and sector regulators
- Revival of the consumer movement, through enabling provisions in Consumer Protection Laws
- Harmonisation of regional (ECOWAS and WAEMU) and national competition laws

The 7Up4 project has helped in identifying a core group of key stakeholders with an active interest on competition issues – and we would facilitate follow-up actions to ensure that their interest on competition issues is sustained in the future.

We appreciate that the **Africa Competition Community** is small – but realise that it is growing..... We have observed from our work in over 20 countries in this continent that it is extremely critical to support this community as it holds the key for facilitating and sustaining competitive markets (in key sectors), for balancing interest of a large number of consumers with that of the market players. CUTS continues to nurture and develop this community with support from our partners, and through networks like the **International Network of Civil Society Organisations on Competition (INCSOC)**. But there is much more that needs to be done to support this movement on competition reforms and we hope that other members of the international development community would recognise this need.

A novel effort led by DfID and IDRC has been initiated to expand this **African Competition Community** through the establishment of an **Africa Competition Forum**, which I am sure you would hear more about from them.....

Finally, I wanted to share that CUTS has been advocating for the need to observe a day in the calendar as the **WORLD COMPETITION DAY** – as a means to create greater international interest on competition policy and law issues. While we continue to lobby the international community for the acceptance of our plea for a **WORLD COMPETITION DAY**, we hope that we can facilitate (with the support of the countries assembled here) the process of celebrating a **NATIONAL COMPETITION DAY** in some countries in this continent.....so that a global movement on competition policy and law issues is initiated.

I thank you once again for having joined us in this conference and look forward to an extremely exciting couple of days in Dakar.