

### **3<sup>rd</sup> NATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP MEETING HELD IN NIGERIA**

April 15, 2010, Abuja, Nigeria

“The Consumer Protection Council (CPC) is the closest organization to a competition authority in Nigeria at present in terms of similarity in objectives of protecting consumers. As a result, CPC will support any initiative towards enactment of a competition law in Nigeria as it appreciates its importance.”

This was said by the Mr Emmanuel Atoguba of CPC while chairing proceedings during the 3rd National Reference Group (NRG) meeting on the 15th of April 2010 at Rockview Classic Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria.

The NRG meeting was also graced by Mr O. S. Azubuike, a Senior Trade Officer from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, who pointed out that the Ministry is not unaware of previous efforts at having a competition regime in Nigeria, and they have in place a programme aimed at supporting competition policy reforms. It was therefore important for members to bear this in mind and avoid recommending a parallel programme while contributing in the debate.

During the debate, members expressed their disappointment about the slow pace of competition reforms, at a time when various stakeholders have made some strides in having a competition law in place, which resulted in six different Competition Bills to date, which have all failed to be enacted into law. The NRG members discussed various advocacy strategies that they could adopt to address the various challenges that were identified during the two year project. Members also identified the need for dialogue with key stakeholders with a role to play in ensuring the passage of bills, key among them being the Senate Committee on Commerce, which could be informed about the project and its findings.

The NRG meeting was the 3rd meeting under the project “Strengthening Constituencies for Effective Competition Regimes in Select West African Countries”, dubbed the 7up4 project, which is being implemented by CUTS International in seven countries namely Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. In Nigeria, the project is being implemented in partnership with the Consumer Empowerment Organisation of Nigeria (CEON), a local NGO.

The NRG membership comprises of stakeholders drawn from business, civil society, sector regulators and government departments. The purpose of the meeting was to map out strategies for addressing the various challenges on the establishment of a competition regime in Nigeria that were unearthed during the two year project. The outcome of the debate was a roadmap, outlining specific action points as well as institutions responsible for driving the issues forward. These also include initiatives aimed at dialogue with important stakeholders, such as members of the National Assembly, who have a critical role in sustaining the agenda.