

## CONSUMER AWARENESS KEY TO COMPETITION REFORMS IN SENEGAL

April 6, 2010, Dakar, Senegal

“Competition is necessary for the “Senegalese economy, and certain sectors need to be liberalised to stimulate competition in them”, observed El Hadji Alioune Diouf, Director of Internal Trade at the Ministry of Commerce in his keynote address at the national dialogue on competition organised jointly by CRES Senegal and CUTS India. He provided a brief history of the evolution of the competition regime in Senegal, and commended CRES for having undertaken this research on the subject. He also indicated the government’s willingness to incorporate findings from CRES research report into the national competition reforms process. He pointed out the necessity to gain support from the private sector as they are one of the major stakeholder in the process.

Today’s meeting was the third round of discussions of key stakeholders held at the hotel Novotel here in Dakar. This important event was graced by the presence of El Hadji Alioune Diouf, Director of Internal Trade at the Ministry of Commerce; Jean Pierre Phan, Vice president of the National Competition Commission of Senegal; Mame Adama Gueye representing the Advocate’s Council; Momar Ndao from Ascosen and Professor Abdoulaye Diagne, Executive Director of CRES. Samir Bhattacharya represented CUTS in this event.

Samir Bhattacharya presented the background of the 7Up4 project (implemented jointly by CRES and CUTS in Senegal, as part of a regional initiative) and its present status. He pointed out that one of the goals of the meeting would be to identify key messages for advocacy and recommend actions for strengthening the national competition regime of Senegal. A possible platform for advocacy, he opined could be evolved by creating a network of journalists in order to forward the advocacy agenda.

Professor Diagne asserted that there has been an enhancement in the credibility of CRES as a national mouthpiece on competition issues in Senegal over the course of the project. He explained the need for competitive market for achieving consumer welfare, especially in the current context of West African countries, which have opened up their markets not too long ago. He gave some examples where consumer welfare can be hurt by various anti-competitive practices and hoped that such practices can be brought before the public, as a result of the culture of competition, created through this project.

Mbissane Ngom, the core researcher representing CRES highlighted the major findings and key messages that have emerged from the assessment of competition regime in Senegal. This was followed by an inspiring debate, which led to a consensus among participants for a ‘resource centre’ on Competition Policy and Law to be established in Senegal.

One of the key points that emerged from the meeting was the need to detechnicalise the subject of competition for the comprehension of common citizens, and the role of the media in this regard was seen to be crucial. The Senegalese Competition Commission also needs to increase their interaction with key stakeholders, for their benefit.. In the subsequent session that analysed the existing Competition Law of the country, it was strongly felt that certain areas of the legislation needed refinements. Participants encouraged CRES and CUTS to carry out a planned advocacy to bring in these reforms in the law.

The idea of preparing module on competition policy and law issues for university courses and sensitising parliamentarians on the need for competition reforms, were found to be imperative.