

CONSENSUS ON URGENCY IN COMPETITION ENFORCEMENT IN GHANA
September 19, 2008, Accra, Ghana

Ghana should fast track the process of evolution and implementation of the competition law in the country. There seem to be consensus across stakeholder groups on this point, as was reverberated during a national stakeholders' meeting held in Accra today to discuss the state of the prevailing competition regime in the country.

This stakeholders' meeting was jointly organised by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), Ghana and Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International), India as part of a two-year regional (West Africa) project that is being implemented in Ghana since June 2008. The project entitled, 'Strengthening Constituencies for Effective Competition Regimes in Select West African Countries' (also referred as the 7Up4 project) is being simultaneously implemented in six other countries (Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) in the region. Similar national stakeholders' meetings are also being organized in the other project countries at around the same time.

One of the main purposes of getting select national stakeholders together was to provide them some idea of the competition concerns in the country and its impacts on the economy and consumers – something that has been captured in a preliminary paper on the state of competition in Ghana, by ISSER. The idea was to sensitise them of the need and benefits from an effective competition regime in the country, thereby helping garnering support for competition reforms in Ghana.

It was quite evident to the participants from examples of anti-competitive practices prevailing in the economy (in the cement, banking, food and consumer goods sectors), how these practices were hurting consumers and the country's economic interests. Participants seem to be convinced how the lack of competition in the market was affecting consumers (of goods and services); inflicting maximum damage on the poor.

The government was lauded for having taken a step in the right direction by undertaking the process of developing a competition bill for Ghana, and was pleaded to maintain the momentum by operationalising the bill, without further delays.

An outcome anticipated from this meeting was to develop an informal group of stakeholders interested to pursue the issue of competition policy, regulatory reforms and consumer protection in the country and provide guidance and feedback over the period of implementing this project in the country. Towards the end of the meeting, it was clear that substantial progress had been made in establishing this informal group – as some of the stakeholders pledged their support for this project and assured their help to ISSER and CUTS.

The project entails detailed research on competition and regulatory issues in the country, thereby providing inputs to policymakers for evolving a healthy competition culture.

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