

OPENING REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. MC MASILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCASSION TO CELEBRATE THE WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY 2025 HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA, CITY OF MBOMBELA

Thursday, 13 March 2025

Programme Facilitators, Dr Maanda Dagada and Ms. Cynthia Moshaba;
Head of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism in our Province, Ms. Immy Serakalala;

Acting Deputy Commissioner and Acting Commissioner of the National Consumer Commission, Mr. Hardin Ratshisusu;

Moderator of the session, Ms. Karabo Motaung-Mohlala;

Our esteemed panelists;

Officials from government and the University of Mpumalanga;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

San'bonani!

1. One Peter Drucker, who was an Austrian-American management consultant, educator and author, once said and I quote: ***“The consumer is the most important part of the economic process. Because without consumers, there would be no need for production”***, unquote.
2. Undoubtedly, no economy can thrive without the consumer! If there was no one to consume the available goods and services, there would not be a need for production.

3. Programme Facilitators, it is, thus, my honour and pleasure, to be part of this auspicious occasion, the celebration of the **Annual World Consumer Rights Day**, observed under the theme: ***“Empowering Consumers, Balancing Rights with Ethical Business Practices”***.
4. Today is actually a precursor to the actual day, as the **World Consumer Rights Day is actually celebrated on March 15 annually**.
5. Taking from the words of Peter Drucker, which I opened my talk with, Consumer Rights Day should, in fact, be celebrated every day, as consumers play a critical role in making the world go around. **Without consumers, there will be no economic activities!**
6. If consumer rights are not protected, our economy and the world would not tick; hence the call to ***“Empower Consumers [by] Balancing [their] Rights with Ethical Business Practices”***.
7. Programme Facilitators, I am therefore excited, that I am amongst a dynamic group of businesses, professionals, innovators, and advocates who all share a common commitment to protecting and empowering consumers.
8. As we gather here this morning, we are reminded of the incredible role that both business and consumers play in **shaping the global economy**.

9. Their choices, preferences, and feedback drive the businesses we build; the services we offer; and the innovations we bring to life. In many ways, it is important that the consumer is at the heart of what we do.
10. World Consumer Rights Day was first observed in 1983, **to raise global awareness about consumer rights and the importance of fair practices in the marketplace.**
11. And today, more than ever, as businesses and technologies evolve rapidly, it is thus critical to **remind ourselves of the importance of consumer protection, trust, and transparency.**
12. Consumer rights have come a long way since the initial adoption of this day, and this evolution reflects broader changes in the way we do business. The days of simply selling a product and moving on are long behind us.
13. Today, consumers expect more; **they demand transparency, ethical practices, and accountability** from the businesses they engage with. In turn, businesses must strive to uphold the highest standards of fairness and integrity.
14. This celebration is, therefore, not just about raising awareness; it's also about **re-committing ourselves to the fundamental principles that underpin our roles as business leaders.**

15. Consumer rights are closely tied to the trust that underpins every relationship we have with our customers.
16. Programme Facilitators, we need to recognise that **consumers are no longer passive recipients; they are active participants who have a choice.**
17. **Service providers must deliver quality and value** in the products or services they offer, or even in customer interactions. But this goes beyond that, as providers of goods and services **must also ensure privacy, respect data and create an environment where every consumer feels valued and heard.**
18. This is because the rise of digital platforms, e-commerce, and the increased use of personal data has created new challenges and opportunities.
19. As we embrace these new opportunities, we must **prioritise consumer rights, ensure that customers have access to clear information, are not misled, and can make informed decisions.**
20. Programme Facilitators, as we celebrate World Consumer Rights Day, we must at all times be **reminded of our responsibility to advocate for ethical business practices.**

21. In a time where competition can be fierce, and the pressure to innovate is high, it is easy to overlook the importance of consumer trust. However, we must always be mindful that our long-term success is built on relationships that are **founded on trust, respect, and fairness.**
22. At its core, a business that prioritises consumer rights not only strengthens its reputation, but also cultivates a loyal customer base. We must always remember that when **we build trust, we build something invaluable** – a strong foundation for sustainable growth and success.
23. And as we move forward, let us commit ourselves to advocate for consumers, ensure that every individual is treated with respect and fairness, and foster an environment where ethical business practices are the norm, not the exception.
24. Let today be a reminder of the **immense value that consumers bring to our businesses, and the responsibility we collectively carry to protect and advocate for their rights.**
25. As we continue to innovate and lead, let us do so with a sense of duty to our customers by ensuring their rights are at the forefront of everything we do.

26. Programme Facilitators, before I retreat, I would like to inform you that our Province has been assigned by the Presidency to **host the G20 Tourism Ministers' meeting in September** this year.
27. This is really a great opportunity **to showcase our tourism products offerings**, and we believe our economy will surely benefit from hosting such international meeting and related engagements.
28. We will ***Leave No One Behind, as We Grow Mpumalanga*** together!

Cheers to World Consumer Rights Day!

Ngiyabonga!