

**Visit Report**

**Meeting of the CI Council**

London, February 10-11, 2016

*George Cheriyan attended the meeting of the Council of Consumer International (CI) at London on February 10-11, 2016. The meeting was attended by 17 members of the council, including the co-opted members. In addition, from CI Secretariat, Amanda Long, Director General, CI along with 4 senior staff and CI Legal and Governance Adviser also attended the meeting.*

**Objective**

***Proceedings Day 1, February 10, 2016***

The meeting was chaired by Bart Combée-BCE (President, CI). He made welcome and introductory remarks. Since it was the first meeting of the newly elected council, some exercise was done to know each other better and more about the organisations represented. After adopting the minutes of the brief council meeting held in Brasilia on November 21, 2015, Ivo Mechels, newly appointed CEO of TEST-ACHATS (Brussels), was appointed to the Council and the Board of Trustees, in place of Benoit Plaitin, who resigned after getting elected in the General Assembly held in Brasilia.



Long made a presentation on CI covering the background of the organisation (membership, highlights of the work for last three years etc.), its resources and present focus of work. She said CI is having a total of 39 staff, covering the HQ as well as the regional offices. She also stated that CI is campaigning in the Global Market Places to influence MNCs (ex. campaign against Volkswagen as well as Antibiotic off the Menu etc.) and intervening in international policymaking forums, such as G20, Finconet, FSB etc. While presenting the financial status she said, 90 percent of CI funds are coming from three major organisations, and out of three, one is in the process of pulling out CI, which is major concern.

During the open discussion Cheriyan spoke on various issues, such as relevance of international themes, MNCs not fulfilling the promises made at international level, decisions taken at international platforms, such as Finconet, FSB etc., not binding on central banks/security boards, role of regional offices etc.

Russell Cooke, CI Legal and Governance Adviser, made a presentation on CI's structure and '*Governance Roles & Responsibilities*' of Council Members followed by questions and answers. It was followed by a case study to better understand the 'conflict of interest'.

The day one concluded with a guided tour to British Museum, mainly the 'Roman British' section and followed by a formal dinner.

### ***B. Proceedings Day II, February 11, 2016***

The day started with Long presenting CI strategy and key priority areas for 2016. It was followed by two presentations on International and Market place campaigns by Justin Macmullan, Head of Advocacy and Philipa Hunt, Director, Campaigns and Communications.

### **Areas/Themes for International Advocacy**

1. United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP): Revision of UNGCP was a success of CI campaign in the last few years. It will continue the advocacy with UNCTAD for effective implementation of the revised UNGCP, adoption of WCRD by UN and getting IEG operationalised in 2016.
2. Campaign for Consumer Agenda in Trade: It will advocate for Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), a proposed international trade treaty between 23 parties, including the European Union and the US, aims at liberalising the worldwide trade of services, such as banking, healthcare and transport.
3. Helping Consumer to Choose Health Diets: It will advocate at upcoming WHO World Health Assembly in Geneva during May 23-28, 2016.
4. Mis-selling in Financial Services: It will advocate with Finconet
5. Safer and fairer Digital Financial Services: Using the position of CI as the Co-chair of International Telecom Union (ITU) working group on completion and consumer protection.
6. People's Charter for the Internet: It will advocate in partnership with World Wide Web Foundation, which was signed during the World Congress in Brasilia.
7. Consumers in the Digital Economy: It will advocate for consumer protection and data solution
8. A new consumer agenda for G20: It will advocate using the presidency of Germany in 2017 and of India in 2018

### **Areas/themes for Global Market Place Intervention**

1. Anti-biotic off the Menu: Theme for WCRD 2016. It will mainly advocate with MacDonald's, KFC & Subway
2. Improving Safety Standards in New Cars: It will advocate with the support of Bloomberg Advocacy Initiative (BAI). Training of Trainers is already in progress in Chennai.

3. Airline Passenger Rights
4. Android Updates
5. Ticketing Scams for major international events etc.

Cheriyen participated in discussions related to most of the suggested areas for international as well as for market place advocacy and made suggestions. In addition, he suggested to include SDGs, especially the 'Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production' for advocacy as well for market place intervention. Long said that CI is already collaborating with Aikya for developing standards for sustainable consumption and CUTS would be definitely involved in the same.



Some of the key concerns related to CI finance were debated during the Council, such as decision of Which? UK to pull out of CI suggestion to close down CI Regional Offices in Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa. Cheriyen expressed his views on the mentioned issues.

### **CUTS Contribution to CI**

Cheriyen said that CUTS is running mainly on project funding and have a deficit budget. Hence, CUTS will not be in a position to make any financial contribution to CI. However, CUTS which is working directly in more than 30 countries and having five overseas offices, is having a vast network and expertise in certain areas, such as International Trade, Competition, Research skills etc. CUTS expertise, especially on competition issues can be used for the capacity building of member organisations. CI needs to develop a strategy and resources can be mobilised for doing the same and also can think about joint proposals. In addition, Cheriyen said three CUTS offices and two resident coordinators in Africa and vast network can be used for supporting CI, in strengthening the consumer protection scenario and consumer movement in Africa. Bart Combée, AL and other members welcomed the suggestion. Rose Marymary Siyachitema from Consumer Council of Zimbabwe expressed her interest to partner with CUTS and be part of events/training taking place in the region

It was decided to have the next meeting of the CI Council in Hong Kong in November 2016 along with CI Asia-Pacific members meeting. HKCC will be hosting the meeting.

### **Meetings on the Sidelines**

Cheriyen had meetings with Bart Combée, President CI & Consumentenbond and Marta Tellado, President Consumer Reports, US and discussed possible collaboration.