

Report of Representation

Various meetings of Consumers International

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, March 5-9, 2012

George Cheriyan (Director, CUTS) and Pham Thi Que Anh (Director, CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre) represented CUTS in various meetings of Consumers International, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, during March 5-9, 2012.

A Regional Meeting, March 05-07, 2012

A regional meeting of members of Consumers International from Asia Pacific and the Middle East was held on March 5-7, 2012. More than 60 participants, representing CI full members and associate members from across the regional along with some special invitees attended the meeting.



Helen McCallun (Director General, CI) presented the DG's Report 2011 mainly covering major achievements, challenges, overview of strategic plan and financial strategy. Bjarne Pedersen, Global Director of CI made a detailed presentation on 'CI's Priority Work Programme 2012-14 and expected key results for 2012. He said the key five work priorities are: financial services, food safety and nutrition, sustainable consumption, consumers in the digital age, consumer protection & empowerment. While participating in the discussions, George Cheriyan suggested, while setting themes and work programme for global campaigns, regional disparities and ground realities need to be taken into consideration. He suggested to keep the themes open and broader and to have regional/country specific focus otherwise the campaign theme will lose relevance and interest among the members.

Under the session for presentations by members on new initiatives, research/studies, Cheriyan made a presentation on 'Consumer Participation in Energy Policies'. Several members expressed interest to know more about CUTS' work in the energy sector. During discussions, under the session on 'Food safety, Security and Nutrition' he suggested to have a closer look at the 'Food Standards and Safety Act' in India, which is having overarching powers related to ensuring safety of food, including dealing with 'misleading advertisements', and also 'Food Security' bill, which is a 'near universal PDS' covering almost 63.5 percent of Indian population.



B. Lecture on 50th Anniversary of JFK's Speech

A lecture by Dr. Anwar Fazal was organised on March 07, 2012 by Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations FoMCA to mark the 50th anniversary of John F. Kenney's famous speech to American Congress, where he said '*Consumers, by definition, include us all. They are the largest economic group in the economy, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Two-thirds of all spending in the economy is by consumers. But they are the only, important group in the economy who is not effectively organized, whose views are often not heard*'. The lecture was followed by a book release, and cultural activities. Mr. Cheriyan and Ms. Pham attended the lecture.



C. Consumers in the Digital Age: Access, Fairness and Representation

The event entitled, 'Consumers in the Digital Age: Access, Fairness and Representation', held on March 08-09, 2012 which was attended by more than 60 participants from Asia, Africa and Latin America. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the opportunities and challenges that consumers face in today's online digital environment, which raises a range of new issues for the global consumer movement. Several papers on various aspects of the topic were presented by experts from across the world.

C1. Global Consumer Survey on Broadband

Jeremy Malcolm and the regional consultants made presentations on the phase I of 'Global Consumer Survey on Broadband' on March 09, 2011. CUTS (India) and HRC were partners in the phase I of the survey representing India and Vietnam respectively. Australia and Indonesia were other two countries participated from the region in the survey. CUTS completed online survey, direct interviews and desk review/research. Consolidating the findings from the region Elise Davidson from Australia made a regional presentation. Cheriyan further added issues related to accessibility, affordability, reliability and complaints redressal during the session. He also raised other issues such as cost, speed, grievance redressal etc. In the next phase the focus would be on issues such as Broadband Nutrition Label (traffic light); Lock-in (long term contract); and Internet Ombudsman.

D. Meeting with DG and Other Senior Staff of CI

Cheriyan met with Helen McCallun (Director General), Bjarne (Global Director) and Indrani (Head, AP-CI) on the side-lines and discussed possible collaboration in areas such as review of UNGCP, financial services, Road to Rio+20, bid for next World Congress etc.

