

## **Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, and Friends,**

It is a great honor to be invited to participate in this forum, and I am deeply grateful to the organizers: The Thailand Consumers Council (TCC), the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA), and the Yayasan Lembaga Konsumen Indonesia (YLKI), along with our partners from the Plus Three countries.

As a founder of the Myanmar Consumers Union, I am deeply committed to advocating for consumer rights and promoting sustainable consumption. In this rapidly evolving digital age, the intersection of consumer rights and technology presents numerous opportunities as well as certain challenges. I strongly believe that our collective efforts in the ASEAN region, along with our partners from the Plus Three countries, are pivotal in shaping a future where technology serves the best interests of our consumers.

Japan, South Korea, and China have established themselves as global leaders in technology: By collaborating with these tech giants, we can harness their expertise to enhance consumer protection and promote sustainable digital practices in our region.

## **Consumer Justice and MCU**

Thirteen years ago, we laid a solid groundwork for consumer justice in Myanmar, based on the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP). During that time, we received significant support from Ms. Indrani of Consumers International. Additionally, our government made the wise decision to allow the MCU to promote the consumer movement, creating awareness among international development partners like USAID, GIZ, and concerned CSO and business groups, enabling us to stand with our friends here today.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation for the unwavering support we received during our challenging times. My deepest gratitude goes to the GIZ ASEAN PROTECT team, the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection, members of the ASEAN Consumer Association Network (ACAN), ASEAN Consumers Alliance Centre and our esteemed colleagues at Consumers International. Your dedication and assistance have been invaluable to us.

## **Consumer Rights and Responsibilities**

Through my involvement in Consumer Education, I have gained valuable insights. It has become evident to me that every service provider must possess comprehensive knowledge of consumer rights; failure to do so results in substandard service, leaving consumers vulnerable to exploitation. Similarly, consumers are obligated to comprehend and fulfill their responsibilities as well-informed individuals.

## **Digital Technology as a Basic Need**

Our national consumer protection law acknowledges eight universal consumer rights. The first one is the right to the satisfaction of basic needs. In today's world, digital technology has become one of our major basic needs. Ensuring access to and the responsible use of digital technology is essential for the well-being and empowerment of consumers. The right to a healthy environment encompasses not only the natural environment but also the social and economic environments. We must advocate for these rights and ensure that digital advancements contribute positively to our societies.

### **Traceability & Consumer Centricity.**

We must implement a powerful and efficient traceability system and mechanism to ensure accountability and protection. It's crucial to eliminate any harmful or substandard products and services from the very beginning by prioritizing pre-market surveillance, in addition to the post-market surveillance favored by regulators and authorities.

In light of the ongoing challenges faced by Myanmar, such as limited digital infrastructure, lower levels of digital literacy, and ongoing political instability, which complicate the enforcement of consumer protection laws, it has become increasingly clear that the path to rebuilding Myanmar must be rooted in the principles of a Consumer-Centric Industry and a Consumer-Oriented Society. By embracing a consumer-centric approach, we can foster industries that prioritize the needs and rights of consumers, ensuring that products and services are not only safe and reliable but also aligned with the aspirations of our society. This shift will empower our citizens, allowing them to make informed decisions and actively participate in the economic recovery of our nation.

Moreover, a Consumer-Oriented Society emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and ethical practices in both public and private sectors. It is through such a society that we can build trust, restore confidence, and create an environment where businesses thrive by genuinely serving the people.

As representatives of consumer organizations from across the region, I humbly ask you all to join us in advocating for these principles. Together, we can contribute to the reconstruction of Myanmar by ensuring that consumer rights and interests are at the heart of our nation's recovery efforts.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the cause of consumer protection.

We look forward to our collective efforts in shaping a better future for Myanmar.

Maung Maung  
Founder and Principal of Myanmar Consumers Union  
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