

# World Consumer Rights Day Forum 2016 - IPS Calls for Policy Makers to Engage More with Consumers

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**Colombo: 15th March 2015 - The Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) stresses the importance of consumers and policy makers getting together to identify issues that affect the country's consumers. IPS Executive Director, Dr. Saman Kelegama says "this will help determine what policies are needed to ensure that the interests of consumers are safeguarded".**

He made these remarks at the World Consumer Rights Day Forum (WCRDF) 2016, recently held at the IPS Auditorium in Colombo. The event was organized by the IPS for the 4th consecutive year, in view of World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD). Speaking further Dr. Kelegama pointed out that "communication and information go hand in hand when it comes to building a successful consumer policy".

In order to ensure consumer protection, Chief Guest at the Forum Dr. Wickrama Weerasooria, Insurance Ombudsman, said that "Consumer Affairs Authority should be renamed as Consumer Affairs and Trade Practices Authority and be taken under a constitutional council", while stressing the need to "appoint an ombudsman for consumer services". He also stated that that under 30 of the Act there is adequate powers for the consumer to take action against unfair trade practices.

Delivering the key note address, former Chairman of the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA), Sarath

Wijesinghe stressed on the importance of 2016 theme of WCRD 'Antibiotics off the Menu'. He also emphasized that "We should be a party to the international consumer organizations and the activism on consumerism. Media has an important role to play in this issue by giving balanced and important news".

The topics discussed at the forum covered areas that the general public faces on a daily basis – and included presentations on Sri Lanka's Future Electricity Pricing Strategy, by Damitha Kumarasinghe, Director General, Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka, Role of Standards in Safeguarding Consumer Interest by Nayana Satharasinghe - Deputy Director General, Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI), Need for Regulating Pesticide Use in Agricultural by Rohan Rajapakse, Senior Professor and Chair of Agricultural Biology, University of Ruhuna and Balancing the Scales: Taming Supermarket Buyer Power by Kithmina Hewage, Research Assistant, IPS.

Participants representing various consumer organizations, the government and private sector, consumer groups, NGOs, civil society, academia and media, were present at the event. Chaired by IPS Research Fellow, Janaka Wijayasiri, the stakeholders held a discussion on the issues highlighted above, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of future developments and implications in relevant areas.



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