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## **MAKING DIGITAL MARKET PLACES FAIRER FOR ALL INTERNET USERS/CONSUMERS**

Over 3 billion or 40% of the world's population is now online, compared with just 1% in 1995. With all projections of internet business activities suggesting this number will continue to rise. Vanuatu is also part of the growing trend of accessing online/internet businesses and other online activities.

Reflecting Vanuatu's experience, the number of social media users is ever increasing and e-commerce services is starting to transform the way people do their shopping and also giving consumers a lot more choices than ever before which is something consumers should appreciate. However, there are great concerns raised on internet users'/consumers' Protection Security and Privacy, and importantly trust and confidence in their daily online activities.

Occasionally on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, Consumers International, the committed and recognized body of 240 members of the Association across 120 countries in the world specifically celebrate this day amongst member countries to advocate for the rights of Consumers to ensure knowledge and recognition for these basic rights of all consumers, and demanding for those rights to be respected and protected according to each individual's constitutional rights.

On 15 March 2018, Vanuatu will join 240 members of Consumer International across 120 countries to specifically celebrate this day advocating for the rights of Consumers and to ensure the basic rights of all consumers are known to them, and demanding for those rights to be respected and protected according to each individual's constitutional rights. This year's theme for the World Consumer Rights Day is **Making Digital Market Place Fairer.**

TRR with assistance of its Partners the Vanuatu Police Force through its crime and prevention Unit, Vanuatu National Youth Council (VNYC), Woman against Crime and Corruption (WACC) will coordinating the days' celebrations in promoting recognition and celebrating the World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018. The main aim of this year's event is to promote awareness on importance of making sure that internet users/ consumers:

- Have Access to fair and secure internet;
- Understand their rights and responsibilities before they use internet to do trade and marketing activities, sales and purchases etc.;
- Are assisted and have support to take Action against scams and fraud through online activities;
- Are assured better protection online in doing business and other needed activities.

Such events will contribute to key stakeholders such as *Consumers, Respective Authorities, Responsible Government Departments/Ministries and Services Providers* to recognize and making sure that there are measures in place to minimize the risks to online consumers or users who rely on online services to satisfy their needs and wants. The event will also continue to contribute to provide support and assistance to ICT/Telecommunications /Internet consumers on required information and actions that must be observed and action when required; signal to the government of Vanuatu the importance of establishing the Consumer Rights and Protection mechanism and or body that will oversee the consumer rights issues that are affecting the good citizens of Vanuatu today; observe mechanism and measures that are currently in place and promote more of their existence for consumers to be aware of and to signal to online/internet service providers the importance of creating an avenue to build consumer trust and confidence.

Consumers of all services and products are key drivers of the Economy. Without these people, there will be no money making businesses around the societies that we are all living in thus the need to promote and observe their rights and responsibilities.

In the spirit of promoting Consumer Rights in Vanuatu, TRR and its partners is calling the Government officers, NGOs, private companies and general public to come and be part of the event.

This year's celebration will take place at the **TASANAK PARK (at the Sea Front Stage)** on Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018 for the whole day. The general public is encouraged to attend or follow on FM 107. Buzz FM and TBV live coverage.