

GREETINGS
WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY 2014
SUNDAY, MARCH 09, 2014

Salutations:-

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Members of the Congregation,

I greet you all on behalf of the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce.

Each year on March 15, we celebrate **World Consumer Rights Day**. This year, the focus is on tackling the issues that most affect consumers of mobile phone services, or more cogently put: **Fixing our Phone Rights**.

As Consumer International (CI) indicates, in 2013 an estimated 6.8 billion people owned a mobile phone. Juxtaposed that against the fact that there are only 7.2 billion people in the world and we see even more clearly the magnitude of this phenomenal development.

In Jamaica, we have about two million mobile phone subscribers in a population of 2.7 million people. All of this is not only an indication of progress, but also has implications in terms of service delivery, quality, costs, and so on.

Consumer International has highlighted a number of issues affecting mobile phone consumers across the world. Some of these include:

1. Providing consumers with fair contracts, explained in clear, complete and accessible language. In other words, all relevant information should be explained clearly so that consumers can exercise their right to make informed choices.
2. Consumers should be provided with their money's worth. Services should be consistent and of high quality, without drop outs in service.
3. Consumers should be provided with fair and transparent billing. As consumers, you ought not to be billed for services you did not request.
4. Consumers should be provided with power over their own information. The personal data that we give up in order to use mobile phones, for example, must be protected by the provider. We must be able to set the terms regarding how this data is actually used.
5. Telecom providers should listen and respond to consumer complaints, and provide proper redress mechanisms in cases where consumers are not satisfied with the services being offered.

As consumers, we face some of these issues not only with telecom providers, but also in other business sectors. As consumers, therefore, we must be vigilant in ensuring that our rights are not violated. We must, at all times, support each other as consumers. Use the services of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) in instances where we believe there is

uncompetitive behavior. The Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) is also here to help protect your rights as consumers, and has been doing a tremendous job in that regard. During 2013/2014 the CAC's achievements included:

- Refunds and compensation to aggrieved consumers totaling approximately \$24 million
- 1,421 consumer complaints, handled with 78% average resolution rate
- Face-to-face contact with 88,422 consumers, via 382 activities
- 32 surveys/market surveillance activities conducted
- Advice provided to some 741 consumers and providers, prior to their engaging in business transactions

Ladies and gentlemen, let us join in extending our commendations to the Board, management and staff of the CAC.

Let us join and give God thanks for his blessings, as we observe World Consumer Rights Day.