

Dear guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I want to start by thanking you all for your interest in attending this conference as I would like to thank the American Chamber, US Federal Trade Commission, US Patent & trademark office for taking a part in organizing this conference which will be addressing Identity theft, Consumer & Brand Fraud.

This conference is one of the initiatives of the CPA to enhance consumers and business awareness on the challenges facing their numerous and various interests. Since last year the CPA, American Chamber and US Federal Trade Commission have collaborated and joined efforts in exchanging experiences and best practices to protect consumers and enhance fair competition in Egypt.

For example, in June 2008 we arranged the first national conference on how to protect consumers from Deceptive Advertisements, the main drive behind these conferences is to guide the consumers and businesses through the current and outstanding issues in the Egyptian Market.

As you all know, the CPA's main mandate is to Protect the interest of consumers and at the end of the day whether traders or consumers we are all consumers.

Some people believe the myth that protecting consumers means protecting them from the business while the truth is, we are protecting our societies and our markets, in order to enhance our social and economic prosperity. For our welfare to improve, I personally believe that each one of us must know his rights and fulfills his responsibilities. The responsibilities vary from a person to another depending on the nature of activity while the rights are the same disregarding the type of activity. Among the most important consumer rights are the right to choose, the right to get well informed and the right to obtain safe and high quality product.

For the CPA to protect consumers and make them aware of their rights and responsibilities, we are working on 3 main pillars:-

The **FIRST PILLAR** is about **COMPLAINT HANDLING**. It is worth mentioning that our complaint unit has received a total number of 13 thousand valid complaints since the establishment of CPA of which 91% have been solved. In addition, the CPA has established three specialized committees, one for the auto industry, the second for durable goods and the third for misleading advertising practices where the function of each is not limited to handling complaints rather it is extended to regulate the market and enhance the safety and quality of the industry.

The **SECOND PILLAR** is the **MARKET SURVEILLANCE** with an aim to enforce its compliance and enhance fair competition, the CPA has conducted several market researches and comparative studies such as "Credit Card study, dairy products study, hygiene of food outlets" in addition to weekly price studies on basic food stuff where consumer NGOs have engaged with the CPA in some of these studies which are posted regularly on our website. [www.cpa.gov.eg](http://www.cpa.gov.eg)

The **THIRD PILLAR** is the **CONSUMER EDUCATION**. We have launched numerous seminars and workshops to educate consumers about their rights and to encourage them to proactively practice them. The CPA has recently arranged with the USAID's support a consumer protection exhibition during the **CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY** in March 2009. We also have participated and organized many workshops in cooperation with Universities, Scout Unions and other groups of the civil society. We issued 2 newsletters and supported some consumer NGOs in producing their own consumer magazines. We also have launched an awareness campaign in schools to educate students and teachers about internet safety and computer security. In addition, we successfully agreed with the

Ministry of Education to integrate Consumer Protection topics in the curriculum of different educational levels starting the year 2010/2011.

It is very important to emphasize that without the cooperation and continuous support of the Minister of Trade and Industry and other relevant authorities under his auspices we could not have managed to effectively serve consumers and protect their rights. The CPA also recognizes the contribution of other Ministries such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Communication & Information Technology and the Ministry of Health for their cooperation and support; they have played an important role in where we stand today.

Our international integration gave us the opportunity to learn much more through the exposure to the best practices and experience of the other countries. We are Members in Consumer International, we were the first African member in ICPEN and we applied as an observer in the OECD consumer policy committee. We are cooperating with the EU through a Twinning project which will provide us with institutional, legal and operational support. We also engage with the US government in several technical programs to enhance the capacity building of our staff and other relevant stakeholders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of our conference today, we tackle issues that are considered crucial to Consumer Agencies, Governments and Industries around the world due to the threat they impose on consumers and their impact on the economy and the welfare of the society as a whole.

For years, crimes followed the same age old mantra: Wrong Place, Wrong Time. In the past for a person to commit a crime against another, they both had to be physically present in the same place but at present it is not the case anymore. **Now, it is easier than ever to be victim of a crime, particularly Identity Theft without even realizing it.**

Let me provide with some figures that reflect the significant impact of Identity Theft on the economy and consumers. In the USA in 2008, 10 million were victims of identity theft, a 22% increase from 2007. Resulting a loss of 50 Billion Dollars. I will not elaborate on the Identity Theft issue as the Keynotes speakers will address it more deeply.

I will only tell you an unfortunate personal experience...

I received an e-mail from my bank "as I believed it was really my bank" asking for my personal information claiming they suspected a fraudulent action in my account. So furiously and spontaneously I could have been jeopardizing myself by giving my personal information to the thieves themselves. Therefore, we all should be very cautious when receiving such spam emails.

"Has anyone of you ever received a congratulation email that you won zillion of dollars and that you must only pay 20 Dollars to clear the account and get the cash...?" this is a typical example of consumer fraud.

Another aspect of fraud is counterfeiting and brand fraud which is one of the most wide spread crimes. It is worthwhile mentioning that the counterfeited products account for 5% to 7% of World trade volume which equals 650 Billion Dollars in year 2006. The WHO estimated that 1% of counterfeited pharmaceuticals products exist in developed nations while more that 30% in developing nations.

Finally, I am confident that this conference will not only be an opportunity to address the US experience in these issues but also to have an open discussion on how to PREVENT, DETECT and RESOLVE their proliferation in the Egyptian Market.

And of course I hope this conference will add value to your experiences and to be a step forward towards protecting our economy and consumer interests.

THANK YOU