The International Webinar, "Is ODR Making a Dent? Reviewing the ODR Policy and Practice", was convened on September 22, 2023, bringing together thought leaders, policymakers, and experts from around the world to deliberate on the transformative potential of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) in the digital age.

The event focused on the ASEAN Guidelines on Consumer Protection in E-Commerce, a soft law instrument developed by the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection, which offers crucial guidance to policymakers in the ASEAN Member States for advancing consumer protection in the context of e-commerce and the digital economy. These guidelines, informed by international best practices and strategic documents, underscore the significance of ODR as a means to enhance consumer trust and protection in digital markets.

One of the highlights of the webinar was the announcement of a technical cooperation project led by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). This project aims to implement ODR systems for consumers in Indonesia and Thailand using blockchain and other emerging technologies. Key objectives of this project include evaluating global ODR systems, defining technical requirements for partner countries, building capacities in consumer protection agencies and business associations, and fostering consensus among partners on ODR modalities. The event emphasised the growing momentum of ODR in India, showcasing its increasing adoption in public and regulatory frameworks, and its reliance on technologies like blockchain and AI for efficient dispute resolution.

The central theme of the webinar revolved around the transformative potential of ODR in the digital economy. ODR has already been successfully piloted in various sectors, such as e-commerce and securities, offering a streamlined and accessible means for consumers and businesses to resolve disputes in the online marketplace.

Versatility emerged as a key point of discussion, highlighting ODR's ability to address a wide array of disputes, from consumer grievances to complex commercial conflicts, irrespective of whether they are business-to-consumer or business-to-business in nature. This flexibility positions ODR as a powerful instrument for dispute resolution across industries and sectors.

The importance of political support was underscored, as governments play a pivotal role in providing the legal and policy framework necessary for successful ODR implementation. The ASEAN experience, backed by the "Guidelines," exemplified how government support led to the early adoption of ODR in the region. A similar trend was

observed in the APEC region, emphasising the importance of international collaboration in promoting ODR.

The webinar highlighted India's commitment to ODR and the need for a holistic approach in creating an ASEAN Model National ODR System. The integration of emerging technologies like AI and blockchain into ODR processes was a significant point of discussion, emphasising the importance of careful testing and regulation to ensure efficiency and accountability.

Digital readiness emerged as a critical aspect of making ODR an inclusive instrument, stressing the need for public investments to ensure accessibility for all segments of society. As the world becomes more digitally-centric, addressing the digital divide becomes imperative to ensure that ODR benefits everyone.

The International Webinar on ODR emphasised the pivotal role of ODR in the digital era, not only as a means for efficient dispute resolution but also as a crucial element in building trust and confidence in digital markets. ODR's success and potential align with the broader goal of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By adopting a whole-of-society approach, decision-makers and practitioners across government, international development, the private sector, and civil society can harness ODR as a key tool in their efforts to accelerate progress toward the SDGs through the strategic utilisation of DPI.

The event shed light on the multifaceted aspects of ODR and the ongoing research to establish an international case for its adoption, providing a platform for experts and stakeholders to explore innovative solutions and collaboratively shape a more sustainable and just future in the digital age.