

UNCITRAL Days in the Arab States

April – December 2024

The role of UNCITRAL in the modernization of international trade law in the Arab States

Info sheet for institutional representatives

1. The UNCITRAL Days activities comprise academic gatherings organized with universities and institutions of higher learning in the region, which discuss and consider issues arising in UNCITRAL's areas of work, i.e. the progressive harmonization and modernization of international commercial law through the adoption, use and implementation of legal texts.¹ The events seek to raise awareness of UNCITRAL instruments and the importance of legal harmonization amongst the next generations of academics and policymakers.
2. The benefits of these events to national academic institutions are multiple, including in enhancing their: (a) awareness of international commercial law developments; (b) capacities in teaching and learning in the field of international commercial law; and (c) relevance to internationally minded students and other members of the academic community. As a result, they can: (a) nurture world-class experts in the field of international commercial law; (b) influence commercial law reform processes and required technical assistance, capacity-building activities and other responses to the needs in their jurisdiction and region; and (c) become more comfortable in initiating and promoting cross-border exchange of experience and views on UNCITRAL topics and international commercial law more generally. All of this strengthens their jurisdiction's ability to actively engage and implement sound and inclusive commercial law reforms domestically and participate in shaping commercial law, including through UNCITRAL, internationally.
3. The inaugural UNCITRAL Days for the Arab States will be held between 15 April - 31 December 2024. This new series of event will be held under the following theme: "The role of UNCITRAL in the modernization of international trade law in the Arab States". It will provide a great opportunity to discuss the impact of UNCITRAL texts in the Arab World where they have been implemented² or are being considered for adoption. The need for updating existing texts with most recent UNCITRAL instrument could also be discussed, as well as explanatory and pedagogical materials being made available on various subjects by UNCITRAL secretariat to further common understanding and harmonized approach of UNCITRAL texts³.
4. Below is what you need to know if you want to organize an event during UNCITRAL Days in the Arab States in 2024.

¹ For further information about UNCITRAL, its mandate and work, see <https://uncitral.un.org/>.

² See the overview of the status of UNCITRAL Conventions and Model Laws per country at <https://uncitral.un.org/sites/uncitral.un.org/files/media-documents/uncitral/en/overview-status-table.pdf>.

³ For example, online modules: <https://uncitral.un.org/en/onlinecourses>.

Participation and format

5. As UNCITRAL Days' activities are academic in nature, they are held without admission charges and, within the parameters of partner institutions, open to a broad range of participants, including law students, researchers and other members of the academic faculty, as well as other stakeholders, such as public and private experts and practitioners. In previous editions of UNCITRAL Days, panellists have comprised academics, practitioners, high-level government officials, UNCITRAL delegates and bureau members (such as the Chairperson of UNCITRAL), and members of the judiciary. Many panellists have published materials on UNCITRAL instruments and/or participated in UNCITRAL activities such as working groups, colloquia, etc.

6. The UNCITRAL Days' events have no specific format and vary according to the capacity and preferences of the partner institutions. They have ranged from informal meetings and brown bag-lunches to multi-day international academic conferences, including seminars, workshops, round tables, panels and/or lectures. They may be held in-person, online or in a hybrid format.

7. In accordance with the United Nations United for Gender Parity Strategy⁴ organizers are kindly requested to maintain gender parity in selecting candidates who will participate as panellists during the academic events.

Institutional support from UNCITRAL secretariat

8. The UNCITRAL secretariat supports the development of a programme through dialogue with the partnering organisation. Once there is agreement on these matters, the secretariat provides additional institutional support for UNCITRAL Days' events, such as its logo for inclusion into the publicity materials issued by the partnering institutions, and publicity via UNCITRAL's webpages and social media platforms. The partnering organization is responsible for hosting and organizing the event, including reaching out to speakers and participants and effectively ensuring sufficient participation.

9. The use of UNCITRAL's logo by institutions in promoting the UNCITRAL Days events shall strictly comply with United Nations guidelines. Drafts of materials related to the UNCITRAL Days events should also be provided in advance for UNCITRAL secretariat review, including draft flyers and programmes or any other material. The UNCITRAL Secretariat will not sponsor events that are not in compliance with the United Nations Guidelines for the use of the UNCITRAL's logo.

10. UNCITRAL secretariat staff participation in the activities themselves is most commonly delivered using video or other remote participation (e.g. as a moderator, panellist or speaker) and/or pre-recorded video messages, reflecting budgetary and human resources constraints in the secretariat.

11. The UNCITRAL secretariat is unable to offer financial support to partnering organisations.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/gender/>.

Themes

12. The UNCITRAL Day series events focus on areas of commercial law addressed in UNCITRAL texts⁵ or considered by UNCITRAL in its current work program. Recent developments in the region indicate the following areas as of particular interest:

- a) Alternative Dispute Resolution, with a focus on mediation: The Singapore Mediation Convention has attracted significant interest in the region, as KSA and Qatar have already become a party, and Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco have made significant progress towards its adoption. Moreover, UNCITRAL Working Group III on Investor-State Dispute Settlement Reform has conducted work on investment mediation and dispute prevention.
- b) UNCITRAL Transparency Standards, that are celebrating their 10th year anniversary: The United Nations Convention on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration (New York, 2014) (the Mauritius Convention) and the UNCITRAL Rules on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration, comprise a set of procedural rules that provide for transparency and accessibility to the public of treaty-based investor-State arbitration. It is worth mentioning that Iraq is the only Arab State that has ratified the Mauritius Convention on Transparency.
- c) International Sale of Goods: The United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (Vienna, 1980) (CISG) has already been adopted in several Arab countries, but there is limited information on its actual use and uniform interpretation. This applies to both the countries that have adopted it in the early years (Egypt, Iraq, Syria) and those who have done so more recently (Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Palestine). Moreover, Arab States, together with many other countries, are looking at the CISG both as a treaty and as a source of inspiration for modernizing domestic contract law, and new adoptions may be expected. A related instrument is the Convention on the Limitation Period in the International Sale of Goods, adopted 40 years ago in 1974 and in force since 1988.
- d) UNCITRAL work on Negotiable Cargo Documents: UNCITRAL Working Group VI is currently developing a new instrument on negotiable cargo documents. This new instrument intends to create a new type of document of title entitled “negotiable cargo document” which could perform an analogous function as a maritime bill of lading, for the carriage of goods by rail, road and air in a multimodal or unimodal context.

If you are interested in organizing an event, feel free to register by filling the form accessible at <https://forms.office.com/e/nZifBytPsC> or by scanning the QR code below:



⁵ Available at <https://uncitral.un.org/en/texts>.