



Concept Note: Celebrating sixty years of international trade law harmonization

In 2026, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) will celebrate six decades of contributions to the progressive harmonization, unification, and modernization of international trade law. Established by the General Assembly in December 1966, UNCITRAL has served as a forum in which government representatives and relevant stakeholders from developing and developed countries alike, as well as different legal traditions, can deliberate and reach consensus on key issues of international trade law, devising solutions to overcome significant obstacles to international commerce and promoting sustainable economic development.

UNCITRAL's 60th anniversary presents a unique opportunity. It provides the chance not only to reflect on UNCITRAL's significant achievements and the role of Members States and stakeholders in the development and implementation of UNCITRAL texts, but also to envision UNCITRAL's place in the evolving landscape of international trade and the contributions it can make in the coming years. Together, we can help ensure that UNCITRAL remains fit for purpose for the coming decades and continues to serve as an inclusive and solution-oriented forum, with even greater participation from developing countries.

Governments and relevant stakeholders are called upon to host or support activities to celebrate this significant milestone and further strengthen UNCITRAL and its work. The following offers some suggested parameters for the activities, including with respect to the purpose, topics, formats, and coordination of activities, which would ideally take place between the 59th and 60th sessions of the Commission (July 2026 to July 2027).

Purpose: The 60th anniversary provides a unique opportunity, for instance, to:

- **Reflect on the Outcomes of UNCITRAL** - Consider the major contributions made by UNCITRAL over the past 60 years in promoting the harmonization, unification and modernization of international trade law;
- **Recognize the Role of States** - Highlight the importance of involvement by States from all over the globe in UNCITRAL's work, not only in helping to shape international trade law through the development of UNCITRAL texts, but also in supporting implementation within their jurisdictions and in their regions, including by undertaking legal reforms and supporting uptake by the business community; and/or
- **Encourage Further Engagement** - Support discussions among stakeholders (e.g., government representatives, civil society organizations and the private sector), seek input on emerging challenges and opportunities in international trade law and consider UNCITRAL's role and potential future contributions.

Topic: Various thematic and strategic activities to commemorate the 60th anniversary could be envisioned, for instance on:

- **Ensuring the Relevance of UNCITRAL** - Reviewing UNCITRAL's role in the modernization of legal frameworks for cross-border trade, ensuring that UNCITRAL instruments are up to date and address new challenges and exploring ways to engage with new actors and participants in international trade;

- **UNCITRAL in the Digital Age** - Assessing legal challenges and opportunities arising from the digital transformation, facilitating end-to-end trade digitalization, supporting the development and uptake of new technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence), and enhancing transparency and inclusiveness, in all areas of UNCITRAL's work, including dispute resolution (e.g., new methods for resolving disputes, the expansion of platform-based dispute resolution services, and in the context of the contemplated investor-State dispute settlement reforms); and/or
- **Strengthening Trade Finance and Facilitation for Vulnerable States** - Highlighting UNCITRAL's role in promoting inclusive participation in international trade, particularly for Landlocked Developing Countries, Least Developed Countries, and Small Island Developing States, by ensuring that its legal instruments and capacity-building efforts address their unique challenges.

Format: Activities to commemorate the 60th anniversary could enable broad participation and take various forms (online, in-person, or hybrid) depending on the needs and preferences of host Governments and stakeholders:

- **Conferences and Symposia** - Government-led or collaborative legal, academic or other interdisciplinary conferences and symposia;
- **Workshops and Roundtable Discussions** - Interactive sessions that focus on specific areas of international trade law, such as dispute resolution, international contract practices, transport, insolvency, electronic commerce, international payments, secured transactions, procurement and public-private partnerships and sale of goods; and/or
- **Public Awareness Campaigns** - Media outreach, exhibitions, publications and bite-size outputs to recognize and promote UNCITRAL and its work, as well as Governments' involvement in developing and implementing UNCITRAL texts.



Expressions of Interests: The UNCITRAL secretariat would be grateful to receive expressions of interest from Governments and relevant stakeholders regarding the hosting of activities or other engagement to support the celebration of UNCITRAL's 60th anniversary. To that end, the secretariat would be grateful for Ms. Yanying Li to be contacted at uncitral60@un.org to discuss interest, identify topics, coordinate timing and other aspects of activities, and to seek any additional information. In the meantime, the secretariat expresses its appreciation to Member States for their contributions and engagement with UNCITRAL, without which UNCITRAL's successes of the last 60 years would not have been possible.