



Report of the fourth edition of UNCITRAL Days in Africa

UNCITRAL Instruments as Enablers of End-to-End Trade Digitalization

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Introduction

1. This report highlights the objectives, inputs, deliverables and outcomes of the fourth edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa, held during the year 2025.
2. First, the report provides background information on the UNCITRAL Days in general and on the specifics of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa. It is followed by a snapshot of the fourth edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa that demonstrates the extent of regional participation and the salient features of that edition.
3. The Annex provides a brief description of each activity held.

Background of the UNCITRAL Days series

4. “UNCITRAL Days” are a flagship annual series of regional events that the secretariat of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) co-hosts with partner institutions of higher learning (hereinafter, “partner institutions” or “institutions”).
5. It is conceived as an annual celebration of the establishment of UNCITRAL by United Nations General Assembly resolution 2205 (XXI) on 17 December 1966. The events are organised by the partner university, benefiting from the contribution of academics from the participating jurisdictions, with the support of the UNCITRAL secretariat.
6. The UNCITRAL Days aim at increasing awareness of UNCITRAL texts generally, and at fostering study, research and discussions by the participants on topics related to UNCITRAL’s work. They are aimed at, and involve, young legal scholars, law students and young legal professionals, i.e. the next generation of legal practitioners, academics and policymakers, who in their respective capacities may well become essential participants in, contributors to, and proponents of the work of UNCITRAL in the future.
7. Participation in the UNCITRAL Days is free. The activities held in the UNCITRAL Days context are academic in nature. The partner institutions who take the lead in organizing the activities typically focus for each edition on an area of commercial law identified as being important in the region, under an overarching theme suggested by and coordinated with the UNCITRAL secretariat.
8. The UNCITRAL Days were first launched as a regional event in 2014 by the UNCITRAL Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific. These have been known as “the AP Days”. Given the success of, and increasing participation in the AP Days, an inaugural series for Latin America and the Caribbean was launched in 2020 (“the LAC Days”), followed in 2022 by the first edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa. The initiative expanded in 2024 to Arabic-speaking jurisdictions from the Middle East and North Africa regions, with the launch



of the UNCITRAL Days in the Arab States. It is expected that the initiative will reach Eastern and Central Europe and the Balkan region with the inaugural UNCITRAL Transdanubian Days due to start in 2026.

9. The UNCITRAL Days initiative in the participating regions has reached, and continues to reach, many thousands of participants (students, professors, researchers, practitioners and sometimes even government officials). Numerous participants and organizers noted that the deliverables (lectures, presentations, focused workshops, etc.) have had a positive impact in terms of capacity-building provided to public and private stakeholders with the ultimate result of increasing awareness of UNCITRAL work and of international trade law issues in general. The annual UNCITRAL Days have also led to an increased participation to UNCITRAL’s work by States of these regions and assisted governments and policymakers in the consideration of UNCITRAL texts.

The fourth edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa: key highlights

List of Events, Hosting Institutions and Countries

Ref#	Country	Partner organization	Dates (2025)	Topic	Language
1	Cameroon	Université de Dschang	12 December	Negotiable Cargo Documents	French
2	Ghana	University of Ghana, School of Law	18 December	Dispute Resolution	English
3	Malawi	University of Malawi, School of Law	16 October	Security Interests	English
4	Mozambique	Joaquim Chissano University	7 October	Dispute Resolution, Insolvency Law	Portuguese
5	Nigeria	University of Lagos, Faculty of Law	28 November	Dispute Resolution	English
6	South Africa	University of Pretoria, Faculty of Law	18 November	Electronic Commerce, International Sale of Goods	English

Format of the events and support of the UNCITRAL secretariat

10. The format of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa activities ranged from two- or three-hour online events to one-day in-person or hybrid conferences, depending on the technological capacities, preferences of the hosting institutions and available funding.

11. In 2025, four events were held in hybrid format (Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa), one in person (Cameroon) and one fully online (Ghana).



12. The UNCITRAL secretariat provided support to all UNCITRAL Days in Africa activities, both in terms of participation in the events and by providing *ad hoc* support for the organisation of the activities. Legal officers from the UNCITRAL secretariat in Vienna delivered presentations related to specific subject areas of UNCITRAL's work, based on topics identified by the hosting institutions as being of special interest to them and their students.

13. In most events, the UNCITRAL secretariat delivered a general presentation about UNCITRAL covering its mandate, composition, work methods, instruments and ongoing work. Such general presentation allowed participants to have background information on processes leading to the adoption of UNCITRAL texts and their wide acceptance as offering solutions appropriate to all countries regardless of their stage of economic development or their legal system.

14. In all events, efforts were made to present **UNCITRAL online courses**¹ to participating students so that they could deepen their knowledge and understanding of UNCITRAL texts covered by those courses.

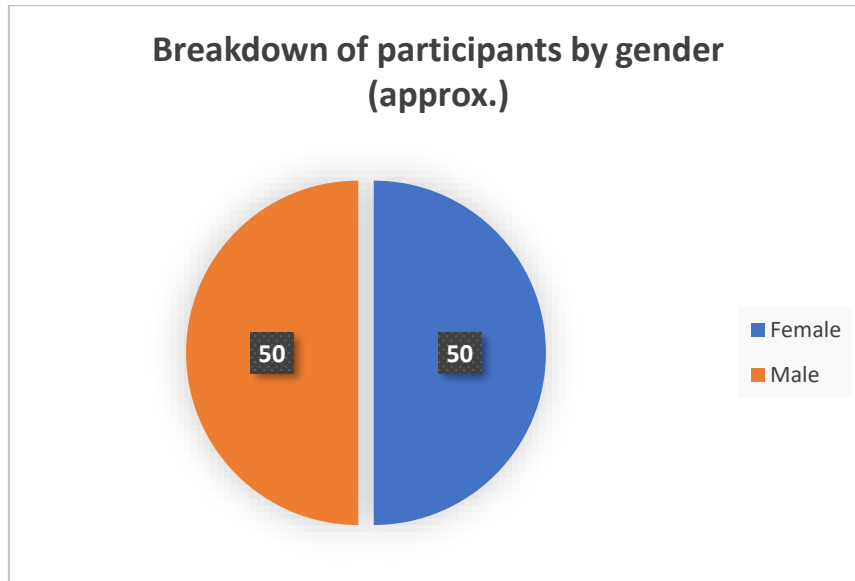
15. On a total of six events, four were held in **English**, one in **French** and one in **Portuguese**. The UNCITRAL secretariat was able to provide support in all those languages directly or through assistance of experts, with the result of enhancing regional accessibility and multilingualism of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa.

Participation, audience diversity and gender parity

16. Altogether, the **six activities** of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa reached over **415 synchronous participants** (some events were livestreamed on separate platforms and therefore it is difficult to assess the exact number of total participants). Partner institutions from the following States were already participating to the previous editions of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa: Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. Partner institutions from the following States joined for the first time: Malawi and Mozambique.

17. Based on statistics provided by the hosting institutions, where a gender breakdown was available, the audience reached was diverse and a balanced gender distribution among participants was achieved.

¹ <https://uncitral.un.org/en/onlinecourses>.



18. While most activities were geared towards the hosting institution, five events (in Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa) were broadcast online or were hybrid, thus allowing remote participation abroad.

19. The events gathered experts (from academic to legal practitioners and government representatives) from African countries at different stages of economic development, thereby ensuring that diverse perspectives could be represented, mirroring the variety of situations and contexts across the African continent.

Main takeaways from events held during the fourth edition

20. The overarching theme was “**UNCITRAL Instruments as Enabler of End-to-End Trade Digitalization**”, focusing on the role of UNCITRAL instruments in supporting the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) and enhancing digital trade. Some events also offered an opportunity to reflect on the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the **United Nations Convention on the use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts**² and the finalization of the **United Nations Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents (New York, 2025) (the “Accra Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents”)**.³

21. Key insights included:

- a. Cargo documents: The **Accra Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents** adopted on 15 December 2025 and expected to be signed in Accra, Ghana, in 2026, will facilitate trade finance, enable the sale of goods in transit, promote multimodal transport, and support the digitalization of continental trade growth under AfCFTA.

² Status information available at https://uncitral.un.org/en/texts/ecommerce/conventions/electronic_communications/status.

³ For additional information, please visit <https://uncitral.un.org/en/ncdconvention>.



- b. Dispute resolution: **Digital dispute resolution** mechanisms can reduce costs and improve access to justice for MSME in Africa.
- c. Access to credit: Growing relevance of the **UNCITRAL Model Law on Secured Transactions** and the need to address digital assets as collateral and digitalization of trade finance securitization.
- d. E-commerce: UNCITRAL texts support implementation of the **AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol (2024)**, covering **electronic trust services, authentication, paperless trading, and interoperability**.
- e. Capacity-building: Developing countries in Africa face similar challenges as other regions in implementing UNCITRAL texts, highlighting the need for **capacity-building**.

Supporting progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals

22. Electronic commerce, alternative dispute resolution, security interests, insolvency law and international sale of goods were in the focus of the fourth edition. Considering UNCITRAL's work in those areas and the objective of the UNCITRAL Days initiative to raise awareness of international commercial law among the next generation, the events during the fourth edition supported UNCITRAL's contribution towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 1, 2, 4-12, 16 and 17.⁴



⁴ For more information on how UNCITRAL supports SDGs, see <https://uncitral.un.org/en/about/sdg>.



Conclusions and way forward

23. The UNCITRAL secretariat is grateful to all organisers and participants, and to all those who supported the organization of the fourth edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa, some of them being partners since the first edition (Dschang University), for the level of interest and enthusiasm which the events have attained, including in social media and local news.

24. The **next edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa** will be held in the context of the celebrations of the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of UNCITRAL, under the following theme: “**The role of UNCITRAL in the modernization and harmonization of international trade law**”.

25. For institutions interested in co-organizing an UNCITRAL Days’ activity, please contact the UNCITRAL secretariat at uncitral@un.org, to explore collaboration opportunities, or fill in the form available at <https://forms.office.com/e/4P0PkhUTrd> or by scanning the **QR code** below.



Annex: Summary of Events

Dschang University (Cameroon) (Dschang, 12 December 2025)

Dschang University organized an event in the context of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa for the fourth consecutive year. The event, held in French, focused on “**UNCITRAL Instruments as Catalysts for End-to-End Digitalization of International Trade**” and provided an opportunity to young scholars and academics to examine UNCITRAL texts and their possible implementation in Cameroon.

Speakers discussed the **United Nations Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents** prepared by UNCITRAL, highlighting its potential to transform the handling of transport documents and enhance digital trade. Speakers also referred to **UNCITRAL texts on e-commerce**, emphasizing the role of functional equivalence in enabling e-commerce and how this principle was integrated in national laws, underscoring UNCITRAL’s role in harmonizing international standards.

Subsequent speakers addressed interoperability challenges in cross-border digital trade and ensuring seamless interaction between diverse legal and technological systems to support global e-commerce. The event concluded with reflections on the importance of legal certainty and innovation in fostering trust and efficiency in international transactions, positioning UNCITRAL instruments as key enablers of a fully digital trade environment.

More than 60 in-person participants attended the event.





University of Ghana, School of Law (Ghana) (Accra, 18 December 2025)

The webinar organized by the University of Ghana School of Law gathered more than 70 participants to learn more about the mandate and working methods of UNCITRAL and the current work of UNCITRAL Working Group II on **dispute resolution in digital economy**.

The exchanges emphasized how UNCITRAL instruments enhance dispute resolution in the context of digital trade. Discussions highlighted frameworks such as the **UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Commerce** and initiatives aiming at the establishment of enabling legal frameworks for dispute resolution in the digital economy, which provide legal certainty and efficiency in cross-border transactions. Speakers stressed that digitalization requires not only technological solutions but also robust legal mechanisms to ensure enforceability and trust in international commerce. By harmonizing laws and promoting interoperable systems, UNCITRAL's work helps reduce barriers, streamline processes, and create a reliable environment for resolving disputes in a fully digital trade ecosystem.



United Nations
Commission on International Trade Law

UG SCHOOL OF LAW

UNCITRAL DAYS IN AFRICA 2025

The Department of International Legal Studies, UGSOL in collaboration with UNCITRAL, will host an edition of the 2025 UNCITRAL Days in Africa

THEME: UNCITRAL Instruments as Enabler of End-to-End Trade Digitalization: How UNCITRAL instruments aid dispute resolution.

SPEAKERS:

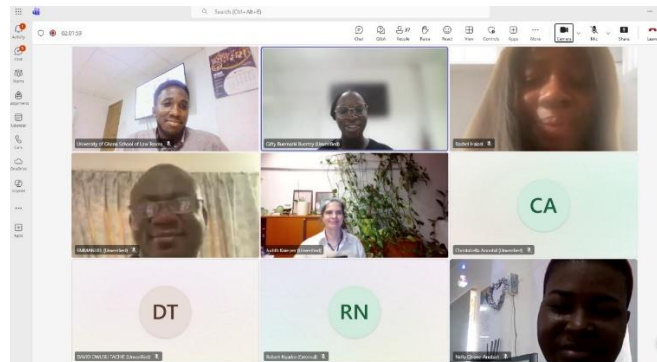


BENJAMIN HERISSET
Legal officer
United Nations, Office of Legal Affairs, International Trade Law Division (UNCITRAL Secretariat)



JUDITH KNIEPER
Legal Officer
Secretary, Working Group II on Dispute Settlement
UNCITRAL

18th DECEMBER, 2025 Online
14:00 GMT / 15:00 CET Moderator: Gifty Buerthey



University of Malawi (Malawi) (Zomba, 16 October 2025)

The UNCITRAL Days in Africa event hosted by the University of Malawi, School of Law, Economics & Government, on 16 October 2025, was held under the following theme: “**UNCITRAL Instruments and Secured Transactions in Malawi**”. The discussions began with an overview of UNCITRAL and its texts, highlighting their role in harmonizing international trade law and supporting legal certainty. This was followed by a presentation on **UNCITRAL instruments related to secured transactions and access to credit**, including an introduction to the **UNCITRAL online course** designed to build capacity in this area.⁵

The ensuing presentation examined Malawi’s legal framework for secured transactions and its consistency with the **UNCITRAL Model Law on Secured Transactions (MLST)** and the **UNCITRAL Legislative Guide on Secured Transactions**, with a particular attention to how

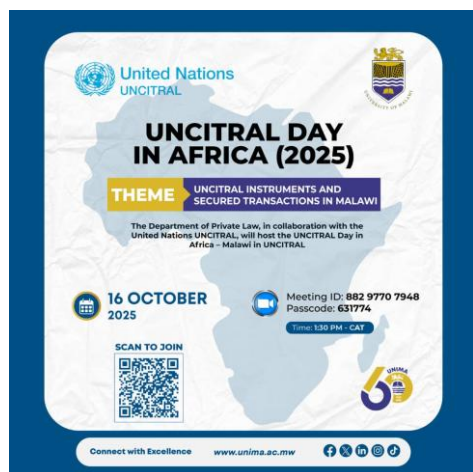
⁵ Available at <https://uncitral.un.org/en/onlinecourses>.



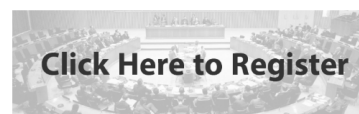
digitalization impact secured transactions.⁶ It explored the modernization of the legal framework for **warehouse receipts** through electronic systems, enabling more efficient and transparent collateral management. The discussion also addressed the potential enactment of the **UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records**, which would allow electronic equivalents of traditional paper-based documents, thereby facilitating secure, interoperable, and legally recognized digital trade practices in Malawi.

Each presentation was accompanied by interactive discussions, allowing participants to explore practical implications and challenges in implementing these instruments locally. The event concluded with remarks emphasizing the importance of adopting UNCITRAL standards to improve access to credit and strengthen Malawi's commercial law environment.

40 participants attended in person, and 25 participants followed online.



The UNCITRAL Model Law on Secured Transactions - a text to facilitate business access to credit



This course is designed for those seeking a practical understanding of how the UNCITRAL Model Law on Secured Transactions (2016) can improve access to credit – especially for small businesses.

Joaquim Chissano University (Mozambique) (Maputo, 7 October 2025)

Mozambique hosted an UNCITRAL Days conference for the first time, in Joaquim Chissano University (Maputo). The event was held in Portuguese and was attended by 40 students in-person, including from other universities in Maputo, with 20 additional participants joining online.

The conference focused on the theme “**UNCITRAL Instruments in Mozambique and Portuguese-speaking Jurisdictions**”. The first session provided an overview of UNCITRAL’s mandate, composition, work methods, and key instruments, highlighting its role in harmonizing international trade law and promoting legal certainty.

⁶ Following this event, Malawi was added to the list of States identified as having legislation predating the MLST but adopting a comparable functional approach to secured transactions.

The second presentation examined **UNCITRAL texts on arbitration and mediation** and their application in Lusophone countries, emphasizing how these instruments support efficient, cost-effective dispute resolution and foster trust in commercial relationships.

The final presentation focused on **UNCITRAL’s cross-border insolvency framework**, comparing its implementation in Brazil and Mozambique and discussing its importance for managing insolvency in a globalized economy.



University of Lagos, Faculty of Law (Nigeria) (Lagos, 28 November 2025)

The event organized through the Alternative Dispute Resolution Society of the University of Lagos gathered more than 50 in person participants, and many more online through the livestream. Titled “**Rethinking Virtual Proceedings in Nigeria: The Role of UNCITRAL in the Future of Online Dispute Resolution**”, it focused on how UNCITRAL frameworks can support digitalization and modernization of dispute resolution in Nigeria.

The first presentation focused on UNCITRAL’s mandate, composition, and key texts on arbitration and mediation, emphasizing their role in harmonizing international trade law and providing legal certainty for cross-border transactions. This session highlighted UNCITRAL’s contribution to creating a predictable legal environment that supports innovation in dispute resolution.



The second presentation explored the intersection of digitalization and **existing UNCITRAL frameworks on alternative dispute resolution**, stressing the importance of adopting international standards to enable effective online dispute resolution in Africa and help overcome barriers to justice and reduce costs in cross-border disputes.

The final presentation focused on the future of virtual proceedings in Nigeria, underlining their potential to strengthen access to justice, modernize court processes, and align Nigeria's legal system with global best practices. Each session included interactive Q&A segments, allowing the participating students to address practical challenges and opportunities for implementation.





University of Pretoria, Faculty of Law (South Africa) (Pretoria, 18 November 2025)

The conference in Pretoria University was held in a hybrid format, with 50 participants in total joining in-person and online. The representative of the UNCITRAL secretariat was able to attend this event in person in the margins of the participation of UNCITRAL to the World Bank Group – Insol Africa Round Table on Insolvency Reform in Cape Town. The event opened with a keynote address by the UNCITRAL secretariat on “UNCITRAL and the Future of Digital Trade,” emphasizing the role of UNCITRAL in creating harmonized legal frameworks for electronic commerce and digital trade globally.

The first panel explored the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol and possible regulatory approaches for cross-border digital trade in Africa. The relevance of UNCITRAL e-commerce texts and their long-standing implementation across African jurisdictions was noted. The session concluded with an interactive Q&A on the links between commitments contained in the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol and recent UNCITRAL instruments on e-commerce⁷ and the current work of UNCITRAL Working Group IV (Electronic Commerce) on data provision contracts.⁸

The second panel addressed digitalization and international trade from legal and practical perspectives, covering international sale of goods, negotiable cargo documents and trade finance digitalization. It was followed by insights and contributions from representatives of the judiciary, of the bar and of the academia as regards the use of UNCITRAL texts in South Africa.

Upcoming Event

UNCITRAL

Faculty of Law
Fakulteit Regterwetenskap
Lêkolleie in Moskop

Make today matter

The University of Pretoria's Faculty of Law, in collaboration with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), will be hosting a colloquium on the theme "The Impact of Digitisation on International Trade: Perspectives from the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol and UNCITRAL." The colloquium will explore how digitalisation is reshaping cross-border trade, commercial transactions, and legal frameworks within the African Continental Free Trade Area and globally. Discussions will highlight the role of UNCITRAL instruments in supporting legal harmonisation and address key opportunities and challenges for policymakers, practitioners, and academics. The event will take place in a hybrid format, with limited in-person attendance and an option for interested participants to join online.

📅 19 November 2025
🕒 09:00 - 16:00
📍 Hybrid Event

If you would like to attend the event online, please email Mr Musa Mahlangu (musa.mahlangu@up.ac.za) to receive the participation link.

For any general enquiries, kindly contact Mr Philip Bignon (philip.bignon@up.ac.za).

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⁷ <https://uncitral.un.org/en/texts/ecommerce>.

⁸ https://uncitral.un.org/en/working_groups/4/electronic_commerce.

