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Possible cost-saving and efficiency enhancing measures

Note by the Secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-eighth session, held in 2025, the Commission was informed of measures under consideration within the United Nations to save costs and enhance efficiency, as part of the UN80 initiative of the Secretary-General and of the potential impact of proposed budget reductions due to the liquidity crisis on the UNCITRAL secretariat (A/80/17, para. 276). The Commission took note of: (i) cost-saving measures proposed by Germany, Israel and Switzerland; (ii) a proposal by France regarding the discontinuation of the rotation of meeting venues between New York and Vienna; and (iii) a proposal by Canada concerning the holding of virtual or hybrid meetings. The Commission requested the secretariat to compile those proposals, and to analyse the related budgetary savings and their implications for the functioning of the Commission, the Working Groups (“WG”), and the secretariat, while ensuring that inclusivity and the Commission’s activities would not be compromised (A/80/17, para. 278).

2. The Commission also agreed to engage in intersessional consultations regarding the various proposals to enhance efficiency in its working methods. The secretariat was requested to facilitate those consultations and to present a summary, along with an overall budget analysis, to the Commission (A/80/17, para. 279). It was agreed that the delegate of Mexico would coordinate the consultative process, involving UNCITRAL focal points in Vienna-based permanent missions and capitals, aimed at revisiting working methods to increase efficiency, achieve cost savings, and adapt to new realities (A/80/17, para. 280).

3. This note contains a summary of the intersessional consultations.¹ It also contains background information and analysis prepared by the secretariat regarding the proposals discussed during those consultations. For budget purposes, reference is made to the International Trade Law Division of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (ITLD), which functions as the UNCITRAL secretariat.

II. Guiding parameters

4. When the Commission considered cost-saving and efficiency measures (hereinafter “Efficiency Measure(s)”) at the fifty-eighth session, the following possible guiding parameters were identified, resulting from the discussions which took into account the specific characteristics of UNCITRAL, preserved its mandate, and responded to current realities. The intersessional consultations were guided by these parameters as they examined a number of the proposed Efficiency Measures.

5. The Commission may wish to confirm that Efficiency Measures should pursue the following objectives:

- Facilitate broad participation by States, particularly developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs);
- Enhance accessibility to UNCITRAL’s work;
- Reduce costs, also for States;
- Encourage the use of modern technologies and contemporary working methods;
- Ensure that any decision on Efficiency Measures is based on evidence and data;

¹ Three rounds of consultations were held respectively on 7 October 2025, 28 January 2026 and 28 April 2026. A summary of each consultation and Background documentation was circulated by the secretariat in support of the intersessional consultations (hereinafter “Background Documentation”), <https://uncitral.un.org/en/consultations-cost-saving-and-efficiency>.

- Reaffirm full respect for the sovereign rights of States, including with regard to the nomination of representatives to sessions; and
 - Ensure equal treatment across all areas of UNCITRAL's work.
6. Furthermore, the Commission may wish to confirm that Efficiency Measures should be subject to the following safeguards:
- They should not adversely affect the quality of UNCITRAL's outputs;
 - They should not limit the number of UNCITRAL's legislative and non-legislative activities;
 - They should not hinder the timely implementation of its work programme, including on investor-State dispute settlement (ISDS) reform; and
 - They should preserve the established working methods of the Commission, which have proven effective over time and have fostered transparent and inclusive deliberations, consensus-building, geographically balanced representation, multilingualism, and multilateralism.

III. Proposals for Efficiency Measures

7. A wide range of proposals were made as Efficiency Measures and they concerned the frequency and duration of sessions, documentation, the discontinuation of the rotation between New York and Vienna, meeting modalities, language and translation considerations, and administrative matters as well as the UNCITRAL Law Library.

A. Frequency and duration of sessions

8. Every year, UNCITRAL is allocated a total of 15 weeks of conference services, with the Commission taking a decision on how to allocate those 15 weeks. The practice has been that 12 weeks are allocated for WG sessions and three weeks for the Commission session.

9. The conference services, which operate within the regular United Nations budget, allocate six weeks for WG sessions in New York during the first half of the year and six weeks for WG sessions in Vienna during the second half of the year. As the Commission session rotates between Vienna and New York, the allocation of those weeks changes respectively.

1. Development of Working Groups

10. From its earliest sessions, the Commission established WGs to prepare texts for adoption. Over time, mandates became broader and greater discretion was afforded to the WGs in carrying out their tasks. Since 1978, the Commission has maintained three WGs meeting for a total of 12 weeks annually, thereby balancing continuity of work with available conference resources (A/CN.9/638/Add.1, para. 30), while retaining sufficient flexibility to ensure that substantive quality was not compromised by rigid timelines (A/CN.9/638/Add.1, paras. 22–23 and 29–30).

11. Following an overall review of working methods in the context of the enlargement of the Commission's membership² and its work programme, changes were implemented in 2001. At its thirty-fourth session, the Commission formalized a policy increasing the number of WGs from three to six, while reducing the duration

² UNCITRAL was established by General Assembly resolution 2205 (XXI) of 17 December 1966 with 29 Member States, expanded to 36 States by resolution 3108 (XXVIII) of 12 December 1973, to 60 States by resolution 57/20 of 19 November 2002, and most recently enlarged to 70 States by resolution 76/109 of 9 December 2021.

of each session from two weeks to one week. This adjustment was made within the annual allocation of 12 weeks of conference services for WGs and introduced more structured working methods, including the adoption of reports during the same session and their subsequent approval by the Commission.³ Subsequently, the Commission confirmed that the revised working methods had proved efficient. The shorter one-week sessions were considered to offer advantages that outweighed the reduction in meeting days. That included the possibility to address a broader range of subjects, reduced time and cost burdens for delegations, and improved participation.⁴

12. As an example of the flexibility exercised in responding to evolving work requirements, the Commission may wish to recall that it used the conference time originally allocated to WG I (which concluded its work in February 2024) to hold colloquiums on projects for future work.⁵ In addition, the time allocated for the forty-eighth session of WG VI, initially scheduled for April 2026, was cancelled following the completion of its work in December 2025.

2. Proposals to shorten or suspend sessions

13. During the fifty-eighth session of the Commission, the following proposals were made:⁶

(a) To shorten the annual Commission sessions to two weeks (10 working days), with five days dedicated to strategic discussions and future work and five days for the completion of substantive work which has been finalized by WGs;

(b) To shorten the duration of each WG session from one week (five working days) to four days, or alternatively, to shorten the duration of the annual WG sessions from two weeks (10 working days) to nine days;

(c) To reduce the number of WGs, by consolidating existing WGs to achieve administrative efficiencies without compromising coverage of essential topics; and

(d) To suspend the work of certain WGs for a short period of time (for example, one year) or to have the WG hold one session annually (instead of two) when considering topics that were not time-sensitive.

3. Cost of a one-week session

14. The table below sets out the estimated costs associated with a one-week session comparing the cost depending on whether the session is held in New York or Vienna. A one-week session normally consists of 10 meetings and the costs do not differ depending on whether it is a Commission or a WG session.

15. As noted above, UNCITRAL is annually allocated a total of 15 weeks of sessions, which includes conference, translation and interpretation services. The costs of all such services are covered by the regular budget of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) (see proposed budget [A/80/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#), subprogrammes 2 and 3).

16. There are certain costs borne by the UNCITRAL secretariat for the servicing of a session, which includes the travel of staff members (for New York), administrative support (for New York) and live broadcasting (for both locations). Such costs are covered by the regular budget of the Office of Legal Affairs of which ITLD is part (see proposed budget [A/80/6 \(Sect. 8\)](#), subprogramme 5).

³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/56/17)*, paras. 370–383, 425; [A/CN.9/638](#), para. 22.

⁴ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/58/17)*, paras. 270–275.

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Eightieth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/80/17)*, para. 347(c).

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 277 and Background Documentation, annex I: Proposal by the delegations of Germany, Israel and Switzerland.

Table 1
Costs of a one-week session

	<i>New York</i>	<i>Vienna</i>
DGACM – falls within the entitlement of the Commission		
Conference room, management and security	USD 0	USD 0
Translation services – six languages (pre-, in-, and post-session documents)	Handled by UNOV	Handled by UNOV
Interpretation services (approximate calculations)	USD 79,500	USD 80,500
UNCITRAL secretariat (ITLD) budget		
Staff travel (3 staff members) – flight + per diem + terminals	USD 15,000 ~ USD 19,200	No travel of staff members
Administrative support (registration and access to venue) – reduced from 6 days to 3 days per week	USD 660	Handled by staff members
UN Web TV (per week)	USD 2,368 (4 days, 2026) ~ USD 2,960 (2025)	USD 4,375 (4 days, 2026) ~ USD 5,500

4. Current approach due to the liquidity crisis

17. Due to the ongoing liquidity crisis at the United Nations, a number of austerity measures have affected the allocated conference services. For the WG sessions in New York during the first half of 2026, one meeting (3 hours) was cancelled per week, resulting in a 4 and ½ day session. The Commission session was also requested to cancel three meetings, which would amount to 1 and ½ days. For the WG III session in Vienna in March, interpretation services were available for four days only, resulting in the formal session being shortened by a day. Accordingly, some of the proposed Efficiency Measures in paragraph 13 above were imposed on the Commission as austerity measures. These measures are driven primarily by budgetary constraints of DGACM rather than by the ITLD budget.

5. Potential savings

18. With regard to the proposal to suspend the work of certain WGs or to shorten the duration of a WG or Commission session, savings might be realized within the budget of DGACM depending on the specific circumstances.

19. Savings to the ITLD budget would arise where sessions in New York are cancelled altogether, as this would eliminate the need for staff travel, administrative support and UN Web TV coverage. In the case of sessions cancelled in Vienna, savings would arise mainly from the discontinuation of UN Web TV coverage. The estimated savings under the ITLD budget for the cancellation of one week of session would amount to between USD 18,620 and USD 22,820 in New York, and approximately USD 5,500 in Vienna (see table 1).

20. Where a WG or Commission session in New York is shortened rather than cancelled, staff would still need to travel, but savings could arise from reduced daily subsistence allowance (DSA) expenditures, lower administrative support requirements, and the discontinuation of UN Web TV coverage for the duration of the reduction. In Vienna, shortening a session would generate savings for ITLD solely in relation to UN Web TV coverage.

21. The Commission may wish to consider whether it wishes to request the reduction of its 15-week entitlement from the regular budget of the United Nations, which could result in overall savings to the United Nations as detailed above. Alternatively, it may prefer to retain some discretion of the use of the current entitlement to allocate to colloquiums or cancel a session. Indeed, as was the case when the Commission requested an additional week of conference time for WG III in 2025 for a two-year period, it is often difficult to increase the entitlement, particularly as such increase would need to be justified.

B. Documentation

22. A number of documents are prepared in all six official United Nations languages in order to support the work of the WGs and the Commission. Such documents are generally subject to a page limit established by the General Assembly,⁷ unless the document relates to a legislative text to which no such limit applies.

1. Different types of documentation

(a) Type of documents

23. The following documents are generated for each WG and Commission session:

- Notes by the secretariat to support and facilitate the deliberations (referred to as “working papers/documents” and “pre-session documents”);
- Draft reports prepared by the secretariat for adoption by the WG and Commission (referred to as “in-session documents”);
- Reports of the WGs and the Commission (referred to as “post-session documents”), which serve as *travaux préparatoires*; and
- Submissions by Governments and other entities – due to austerity measures, these submissions are not translated.

24. On average, for a WG session, two to three pre-session documents are prepared, along with five in-session documents and one post-session document. For a Commission, an average of 30 to 40 pre-session documents are prepared (which includes the reports of the WGs) along with 13 to 20 in-session documents and one post-session document.

25. Due to the current liquidity constraints, certain austerity measures have been introduced relating to documentation services and the secretariat is in regular consultations with document services to ensure the timely production of documents for the WG and Commission sessions. For example, the secretariat was requested to exercise increased flexibility on documentation submission and issuance time frames to ensure full use of available capacity in the United Nations conference services.

(b) Commission documents reporting on non-legislative and other activities

26. For the Commission session, the secretariat prepares documents reporting on non-legislative activities (NLA) it has undertaken. These reports cover various areas, including: technical cooperation and assistance; activities of the UNCITRAL Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific; Case Law on UNCITRAL Texts, digests and related materials; the transparency repository; online and social media presence; the UNCITRAL Law Library and publications; outreach activities; internship

⁷ In its resolution 52/214 B of 20 January 1998, the General Assembly referred to 16 pages with regard to documents originating in the Secretariat and to 20 pages with regard to documents of intergovernmental bodies. Subsequently, the Assistant Secretary-General of DGACM informed in his inter-office memorandum of 15 October 2002 on the application of page limits for reports, that the word count equivalent of 16 pages was 8,500 words and the word count equivalent of 20 pages was 10,700 words.

programmes and co-sponsored moot court competitions; planned activities and resources and funding.

27. For the Commission session, documents on the following agenda items are also prepared:

- Coordination and cooperation undertaken for the Commission as part of its mandate by the secretariat;
- Participation of international governmental and non-governmental organizations in UNCITRAL sessions;
- A bibliography of recent writings related to the work of UNCITRAL;
- The status of conventions, model laws, and other UNCITRAL texts;
- Relevant General Assembly resolutions; and
- The role of UNCITRAL in promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels.

2. Possible ways of savings on documentation

(a) Rationalization of selected UNCITRAL publications

28. At the outset, consideration may be given to whether certain documents remain necessary in their current form or could be merged with other documents, including with a view to reducing the documentation burden for delegations in preparing for sessions.

29. Efforts have already been made to reduce the volume and length of documentation. For instance, the pre-session document for the fifty-ninth Commission session on the “Role of UNCITRAL in promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels” and on the “Relevant General Assembly resolutions” were merged into the note entitled “Relevant General Assembly resolutions and the role of UNCITRAL in promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels” (A/CN.9/1254). Furthermore, the merged document no longer summarizes the content of General Assembly resolutions, thereby avoiding duplication of information already publicly available on the Commission’s web page.

30. Regarding the “Bibliography of recent writings related to the work of UNCITRAL” (A/CN.9/1247), consideration may be given to whether it should continue to be prepared in its current format. In particular, it may be appropriate to assess whether the bibliography could be streamlined, discontinued, or integrated into the paper “UNCITRAL Law Library, publications, press releases and other outreach activities” (A/CN.9/1250/Add.6), currently issued as part of the NLA series.

31. Additional efficiencies could be explored on a case-by-case basis. For example, it may be possible to include notes to the Commission by the secretariat in the reports of a WG, to the extent expressly permitted by the WG. For example, this approach was taken with regard to the report of the eighty-third session of WG II (A/CN.9/1237), which included, in its annex, the texts approved by the WG, together with notes to the Commission as prepared by the secretariat. This avoided the need to prepare a separate note by the secretariat. In addition, the summary of the colloquium organized during the eighty-third session of WG II was included in the report of that session.

(b) Document length reduction

32. A proposal had been made that the length of documents be limited (e.g. to 10 pages (5,312 words) for most documents) to reduce translation costs and enhance readability and comprehension.⁸

⁸ Background Documentation, annex I: Proposal by the delegations of Germany, Israel and Switzerland.

33. The Commission examined the issue of limiting the length of its documentation in the context of broader United Nations efforts to enforce page limits, notably in 2004. Reference was made to the Secretary-General's guidance on documentation, which provided for a systematic application of a sixteen-page limit for Secretariat-originated reports and a twenty-page guideline for reports of subsidiary bodies, as well as to General Assembly resolutions calling for compliance with existing page limits and, where appropriate, further reductions.⁹

34. While acknowledging the objective of improving efficiency, the Commission recalled that the particular characteristics of its mandate made the strict application of page limits inappropriate for its documentation and that of its subsidiary bodies. The Commission emphasized that its work in the progressive harmonization and unification of international trade law, carried out on a consensus basis, required detailed analysis and precise presentation of existing law and practice.¹⁰ The Commission further stressed that maintaining a high level of detail and quality in its documentation was essential to effective consultation with States, the interpretation and application of UNCITRAL texts, and the value of such documents as *travaux préparatoires* frequently relied upon by legislators, judges and practitioners. This approach has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the General Assembly, which has requested that page limits be implemented with due regard to the Commission's mandate and without adversely affecting the substance or quality of its documentation.¹¹

35. In that context, the Commission may wish to take into account the request addressed to the Secretary-General in General Assembly resolution 80/251 of 7 April 2026, paragraph 8: "to enhance reporting on mandate implementation by ensuring that reports are timely, more focused and user-oriented, including by developing templates with differentiated formats and length, as determined by their purpose and the nature of the information being presented, and that they incorporate user-centred design approaches and make greater use of data, while maintaining transparency and comprehensive coverage of important issues."

36. As a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, UNCITRAL is directly concerned by this request and its implementation. Enabling the UNCITRAL secretariat to use data visualization tools would assist in aligning its reporting practices with the expectations of the General Assembly set out above. Such adjustments would facilitate the Commission's consideration of some of these reports, particularly on NLA and contribute to enhancing the usability of those reports for budgetary, audit and evaluation purposes. In this context, the Commission may wish to instruct the secretariat to work with relevant services with a view to developing templates making effective use of data visualization tools, within the existing parameters and guidelines applicable to United Nations official documentation, including relevant accessibility considerations.

(c) Potential savings

37. Possible cost savings related to documentation do not directly materialize in the ITLD budget. However, discontinuation of certain documents and preparation of shorter documents could allow the secretariat to better allocate the time of staff members. Translation, editing, and processing of documents are carried out by DGACM (see para. 15 above).

⁹ General Assembly resolution 53/208 B of 14 January 1999, para. 15 and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty ninth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/59/17)*, para. 123.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, (A/59/17), paras. 124–125.

¹¹ General Assembly resolutions 79/117 of 12 December 2024, para. 20; 53/208 B of 14 January 1999, para. 15; Report of the Sixth Committee A/80/448 of 24 November 2025, para. 22 and *Ibid.*, (A/59/17), paras. 124–128.

38. As with the reduction in allotted conference-servicing time for sessions, caution was also expressed that, if reductions of documentation entitlements were decided, they could prove difficult to reverse (see para. 21 above).

C. Discontinuation of the rotation between New York and Vienna

39. Since its establishment, sessions of UNCITRAL have rotated between New York and Geneva (from 1969 to 1977) and Vienna (since 1978). While the issue has been a recurrent topic of discussion, the rotation between New York and Vienna had been retained.¹² At the last Commission session, a proposal was made to consider discontinuing the rotation between New York and Vienna and to hold all sessions of the Commission and its WGs exclusively in Vienna, accompanied by a programme to financially support the participation of delegates from developing countries.¹³ This proposal is aimed at reducing logistical costs while ensuring equitable participation.

1. Costs of a session in New York

40. As shown in table 1, meetings held in New York generate costs for ITLD, as staff members servicing the session are required to travel to New York. Staff travel (flight and per diem) amounts to approximately USD 5,000 per person as secretariat members are voluntarily downgrading to economy class (under the United Nations entitlements, flights would incur an additional USD 1,400). Typically, three staff members service a session.

41. Sessions in New York also entail administrative support costs of approximately USD 660 per week. Livestreaming on UN Web TV¹⁴ costs approximately USD 2,960 per week in New York.¹⁵ Other cost items, such as security, room use, and conference services,¹⁶ do not materially affect the comparison as they fall within existing entitlements in both locations.

42. Considering that a Commission session in New York could last up to three weeks, the associated servicing costs – particularly where a larger number of secretariat staff are required to travel – could be significantly higher. The Commission

¹² UNCITRAL's rotation scheme originally provided for alternating annual sessions between New York and Geneva, as set out in the founding General Assembly resolution, and was later adjusted following the relocation of the secretariat to Vienna to alternate between New York and Vienna. Over time, delegations have revisited the question: supporters argued that rotation ensured fairness, spread travel burdens and preserved inclusivity – especially for developing countries with permanent missions in New York but not Vienna – while also reflecting UNCITRAL's global character and long-standing institutional commitments. Those favouring an end to rotation emphasized cost savings, administrative efficiency, and the logic of holding meetings where the secretariat is based, noting that holding sessions only in Vienna would reduce travel expenses without altering the Commission's substantive mandate. See General Assembly resolutions [2205 \(XXI\)](#) of 17 December 1966, para. 6; [2609 \(XXIV\)](#) of 16 December 1969, paras. 10 and 12; [31/140](#) of 17 December 1976, para. 4; [66/246](#) of 29 February 2012, para. 48; [31/194](#) of 22 December 1976. See also report of the Sixth Committee [A/32/402](#) of 12 December 1977, para. 42; see also *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/33/17)* para. 90; *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/34/17)*, paras. 121–122 and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/66/17)*, paras. 334–344.

¹³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eightieth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/80/17)*, para. 277 and Background Documentation, annex II: Proposal by the delegation of France.

¹⁴ Other tools are being developed – in the future, the use of UniteVC could be an alternative, less expensive option, which, however, is currently not able to support interpretation or translation services.

¹⁵ In Vienna, costs are slightly higher – approximately USD 5,500 per week.

¹⁶ Conference services costs, including interpretation in six languages and document services including translation, are borne by DGACM and are comparable in New York (approximately USD 79,500 per week) and Vienna (approximately USD 80,500 per week). Estimates based on calculations for programme budget implications applied to new mandates with conference service entitlements.

is usually serviced by at least two staff members for the full duration of the session, with additional staff members travelling to service specific agenda items within their respective areas of responsibility. This could increase the overall travel costs depending on the number of staff members travelling and the duration of the stay.

2. Potential savings

43. The discontinuation of the rotation scheme could generate savings primarily through the elimination of staff travel costs, which constitute the main cost difference between the two locations. While meetings in Vienna incur no travel costs, a session in New York costs approximately USD 15,000. With six WG sessions in New York, **the savings to the ITLD budget could amount to USD 90,000 per year.**

44. For Commission sessions, the situation is similar. For the 2024 annual session, travel costs amounted to approximately USD 40,000. **The savings to the ITLD budget could amount to approximately USD 50,000 per two years.**

45. Overall, this would represent total savings of USD 115,000 to the ITLD budget per year.¹⁷

3. Data on participation

46. The following provides data on participation in the WGs and the Commission, disaggregated by States, with particular attention to LDCs and small island developing States (SIDS), as well as intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

47. Tables 2 to 10 extract data on participants to sessions of the Commission and WGs covering the span of 2018–2020 and 2023–2025.¹⁸ This comprises in total 56 sessions (4 Commission sessions, 6 WG I sessions, 8 WG II sessions, 10 WG III sessions, 8 WG IV sessions, 10 WG V sessions and 10 WG VI sessions).¹⁹ This is based on the regular schedule of WGs sessions (in the first half of the year in New York and the second half in Vienna) and does not reflect the additional one-week of WG III session in Vienna to ensure comparability.

48. Table 2 shows a consistent difference in the level of delegations represented at sessions held in New York and Vienna. The figures reflect the number of delegations (so not the number of individual delegates), whether representing Member States or observer States. The total number represents the cumulative number of delegations across all sessions; accordingly, a State represented in all 56 sessions would be counted 56 times.

¹⁷ The 2026 budget of ITLD is approximately USD 3,694 million, with 91 per cent of the budget allocated for posts and other personnel costs (USD 3,363 million). The total budget for travel is USD 139,900; see also para. 16.

¹⁸ The period 2020–2022 was excluded due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic disruptions.

¹⁹ The following sessions were taken into account: fifty-first, fifty-second, fifty-sixth, and fifty-seventh sessions of the Commission; sessions 30–33 and 39–40 of WG I; 69–70 and 77–82 of WG II; 35–38, 45–46, 48–49, 51 (second part), and 52 of WG III; 56–59 and 65–69 of WG IV; 53–56 and 62–67 of WG V; and 33–36 and 42–47 of WG VI.

Table 2
Participation by regional groups

		<i>African States</i>	<i>Asia Pacific</i>	<i>Eastern Europe</i>	<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	<i>Western European and Others</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	Member States	160	332	156	186	307	1 141
	Observer States	131	121	29	82	63	426
	Total	291	453	185	268	370	1 567
Vienna	Member States	154	353	190	219	329	1 245
	Observer States	108	128	69	93	87	484
	Total	261	458	259	312	416	1 729

49. The table below provides an overview of LDCs attendance in sessions held in New York and Vienna.

Table 3
LDC participation

	<i>LDC Member States</i>	<i>LDC Observer States</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	49	102	151
Vienna	48	95	143

50. The table below provides an overview of SIDS attendance in sessions in New York and Vienna.

Table 4
SIDS participation

	<i>SIDS Member States</i>	<i>SIDS Observer States</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	51	30	81
Vienna	56	12	70

51. WG and Commission sessions in Vienna recorded 1,729 delegations compared with 1,567 in New York. Four out of five regional groupings – Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Western European and Others Group – showed higher participation in WG and Commission sessions held in Vienna. In contrast, participation from the Group of African States was higher in New York. Attendance by LDC and SIDS delegations, as included within the overall figures above, was also higher in New York (151 LDCs; 81 SIDS) compared to Vienna (143 LDCs; 70 SIDS), based on extrapolated disaggregation of the data.

52. The data indicates that, across equivalent WG and Commission sessions and comparable years, there was a higher number of delegations attending the Vienna session, while the number of delegations from the Group of African States, as well as from LDCs and SIDS was higher for New York sessions.

53. With regard to participation by IGOs and NGOs, the following tables 5 and 6 present the relevant data. IGOs and NGOs contribute to the discussions by providing valuable expertise. Participation data on IGOs and NGOs was compiled for the same sessions as above. The totals represent the cumulative number of delegations across all sessions.

Table 5
IGO participation

	<i>Commission</i>	<i>WG I</i>	<i>WG II</i>	<i>WG III</i>	<i>WG IV</i>	<i>WG V</i>	<i>WG VI</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	13	7	8	29	4	8	8	77
Vienna	15	7	14	41	10	18	13	118

Table 6
NGO participation

	<i>Commission</i>	<i>WG I</i>	<i>WG II</i>	<i>WG III</i>	<i>WG IV</i>	<i>WG V</i>	<i>WG VI</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	58	31	127	189	50	89	54	598
Vienna	71	25	120	223	49	90	61	639

54. Noting that the number of permanent missions in Vienna (157) was lower than that in New York (193), it was said that the discontinuation of the rotation scheme could disadvantage States without any permanent representation in Vienna (36 States). Of these, 13 are LDCs, 24 are SIDS, out of which five fall in both categories.

55. Table 7 below illustrates the participation of States – both Member States and Observer States – without permanent missions in Vienna for the 56 sessions as above. Table 8 provides the same comparison for LDCs, and table 9 for SIDS. The data indicate consistently higher participation levels in New York.

Table 7
Participation of States without permanent missions in Vienna

	<i>Member States</i>	<i>Observer States</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	12	35	47
Vienna	10	13	23

Table 8
Participation of LDCs without PM in Vienna

	<i>LDC Member States</i>	<i>LDC Observer States</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	11	17	28
Vienna	10	9	19

Table 9
Participation of SIDS without PM in Vienna

	<i>SIDS Member States</i>	<i>SIDS Observer States</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	1	8	9
Vienna	0	3	3

56. During the consultations, it was mentioned that the composition of delegations was another factor to consider, particularly whether individual delegates were from permanent missions, technical experts from capitals, or composed of both. In the table below, “PM” refers to delegations composed exclusively of permanent mission officials, “capital” refers to delegations composed exclusively of technical experts from capitals, and “both” refers to mixed delegations comprising representatives from both permanent missions and capitals. However, this analysis is constrained by inconsistencies in the lists of participants, which often lack clear information on titles and affiliations. In view of these limitations, data in table 7 is limited to WG sessions in 2025 only.

Table 10
Composition of delegations

		<i>WG II</i>	<i>WG III</i>	<i>WG IV</i>	<i>WG V</i>	<i>WG VI</i>	<i>Overall</i>
New York	PM	16	13	10	8	14	61
	Capital	30	40	27	32	20	149
	Both	11	23	11	15	11	71
Vienna	PM	15	19	15	6	12	67
	Capital	31	37	28	36	23	155
	Both	20	34	19	18	12	103

4. Discussions during the consultations

57. During the consultations, the advantages and disadvantages of the current rotation scheme were discussed (see also footnote 12).

(a) Arguments in favour of discontinuing the rotation and holding all sessions in Vienna

58. Participants emphasized that, when WG sessions were held in Vienna, secretariat staff were already on site, systems and procedures were well established, and logistical arrangements such as meeting rooms, interpretation, IT support, and security were readily available. In contrast, it was noted that meetings held in New York required the deployment of staff from Vienna, additional coordination with local services, and the payment for temporary support arrangements.

59. It was further emphasized that holding meetings in Vienna allowed for stronger substantive and technical support to the WGs. A larger number of staff members were available and could assist as needed, thereby ensuring continuity, institutional memory, and responsiveness during negotiations. In contrast, it was noted that support in New York was necessarily limited to the smaller number of staff on site, which reduced broader staff involvement and placed greater strain on those individuals.

60. From an institutional perspective, participants in the consultations noted that discontinuing the rotation scheme would align with the practice of many other United Nations bodies, which conduct their substantive work in a single location, often the fixed location of the secretariat. This approach was considered to enhance predictability, planning, and efficiency, while avoiding the fragmentation that could result from the rotation. In particular, it was emphasized that holding all UNCITRAL sessions in Vienna would facilitate more coherent thematic management and ensure greater continuity of expertise among staff of permanent missions situated in Vienna. This was viewed as especially important given that many permanent missions are unable, due to budgetary constraints, to consistently rely on the participation of experts from their capitals, thereby placing responsibility for thematic follow-up primarily on locally based diplomatic staff.

(b) Arguments in favour of retaining the rotation scheme

61. Concerns related to inclusivity and equitable participation were raised, in particular for LDCs and SIDS with no permanent mission in Vienna. It was noted that ITLD did not have any budget to support the travel of delegations and as such, that voluntary contributions by States to the trust fund established for that purpose would need to be increased to provide travel support ensuring broad and balanced participation. It was proposed that such financial contributions should be targeted in particular to LDCs and to those least developed and developing States that do not have a permanent mission in Vienna.

62. It was also noted that the composition of delegations attending in New York differed from that in Vienna, with a different combination of State, NGO, and IGO delegations participating in the respective meetings. It was emphasized that this was

not merely a question of the number of delegations attending, but that the broader diversity of viewpoints contributed to better outcomes.

63. Additionally, it was mentioned that the involvement of Sixth Committee delegations based in New York during the WG and Commission deliberations helped ensure continuity between discussions at UNCITRAL and those at the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly.

(c) Transitional options regarding the rotation scheme

64. It was widely felt that a decision to alter the rotation scheme would have significant impact on the working methods of UNCITRAL and would thus require careful consideration. It was also observed that a permanent change to the rotation scheme would need a decision by the General Assembly.²⁰

65. A range of possible transitional options were suggested during the informal consultations. One was to maintain the current rotation yet allowing the participation of additional secretariat staff by and facilitating their remote participation from Vienna. Another suggestion was a temporary suspension of the rotation (for example, time-bound for one or two years). After that trial period, its concrete impact on costs and participation could be assessed before a permanent decision is taken. Yet another suggestion was to consider a different approach for the WGs and for the Commission. For example, WGs could continue to rotate between locations, while the Commission would meet only in Vienna in June/July, which is a lighter period for meetings in Vienna. This could also facilitate the participation of the entire secretariat. Alternatively, the WGs could all take place in Vienna with the Commission session alternating between Vienna and New York, ensuring a linkage with the General Assembly.

66. Finally, it was noted that the discontinuation of the rotation would be subject to the availability of conference services in Vienna, mainly whether it can absorb all 15 weeks of entitlement. This would mean that an additional six weeks of conference services during the first half of the year would be required for WGs (ideally spread during that period), and two to three weeks in June/July would be required annually for the Commission session. The secretariat consulted with the conference services that relocating the WGs and Commission sessions to Vienna would be feasible. The current austerity measures in place in Vienna should also be taken into account in assigning the relevant dates of the WGs.

D. Efficiency Measures relating to meeting modalities

67. Most recently, the WG and Commission sessions have been held in person, with the possibility of registered participants following the session in the six official languages via UN Web TV. While participants can view and listen, there is no possibility for active remote participation. This is generally in line with the current practice of the General Assembly, particularly where decisions are anticipated to be taken.

68. The Commission may wish to recall that such interactive participation was temporarily available during the the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on a dedicated platform. However, meeting hours were reduced from three hours per meeting to two hours due to limitation on remote simultaneous interpretation.

²⁰ See General Assembly resolution [2205 \(XXI\)](#) of 17 December 1966 on the establishment of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, section II, para. 6, which reads as follows: "The Commission shall normally hold one regular session a year. It shall, if there are no technical difficulties, meet alternately at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The decision to retain the rotation was subsequently confirmed, inter alia, in General Assembly resolution [66/246](#) of 29 February 2012, para. 48.

69. A proposal was made at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission, which suggested replacing some in-person meetings, including certain WG sessions and colloquiums, with fully remote meetings, where participants would be expected to participate exclusively online.²¹ Another proposal envisaged allowing both modes of participation (in person and online), thereby enabling members facing difficulties attending in person to join remotely, while ensuring that travel support for developing countries was maintained.²²

70. While these proposals received support on the basis that they could enhance inclusiveness and allow a larger number of delegations to participate from capital, caution was also expressed. In particular, it was emphasized that in-person meetings were more productive, and that in many instances, allowing for remote active participation may be a disincentive for the in-person attendance of experts, as it removed the justification for travel expenses. Furthermore, it was noted that, contrary to expectations, virtual formats had not necessarily resulted in increased participation from officials based in capitals, who faced significant time-zone differences.

71. Regarding these proposals, the following elements would need to be considered:

(a) Procedural requirements for remote or hybrid meeting: As a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, UNCITRAL applies the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly *mutatis mutandis*. Those rules do not currently provide for fully remote or hybrid meeting modalities. Accordingly, the Commission is not empowered to introduce such arrangements on its own, particularly with regard to decision-taking. Therefore, the possibility of remote or hybrid meetings where no such decision is taken may be considered;

(b) Cost implications and resource requirements: while virtual or hybrid modalities may generate savings through reduced travel and venue costs, they could also entail new expenses related to technology, digital platforms, and support for remote participation;

(c) Time-zone challenges and inclusive participation: it is essential to ensure that all participants are able to engage effectively despite time-zone differences, in order to maintain inclusiveness and equitable participation.

E. Efficiency Measures concerning language and translation considerations

1. On screen display of legislative texts and reports in English

72. It was suggested that when the Commission and WGs negotiated legislative texts, such texts should be displayed on screens to facilitate the deliberations, enhance transparency and inclusiveness, and increase the dynamism of meetings.²³ In support, it was stated the interventions would continue to be possible in all official languages with full interpretation.

73. Likewise, it was suggested that the adoption of the reports of the WGs and Commission could be streamlined by inviting delegations to submit written comments within a specified short time frame, which could then be incorporated into the draft report in advance and shown on the screen. It was suggested that this could be experimented at the upcoming Commission session to assess its feasibility.

74. A concern was raised, however, regarding the limitation inherent in displaying texts in only one language, and it was noted that this would run counter to the principle

²¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eightieth Session, Supplement No. 17 (A/80/17)*, para. 277 and Background Documentation, annex III: Proposal by the delegation of Canada.

²² Background Documentation, annex IV: Proposal by the delegation of Colombia.

²³ *Ibid.*

of multilingualism, which is reaffirmed annually by the General Assembly in its resolution on the report of UNCITRAL.²⁴

2. Artificial intelligence-enabled translation of documents

75. A suggestion was made to introduce automatic or semi-automatic translation for certain documents of the Commission in order to reduce costs.²⁵ However, it was clarified during the consultations that translation of official documents had to rely on in-house translation services of the United Nations. While automatic or semi-automatic translation could be utilized, this would in any case require verification by the secretariat, effectively placing an additional burden on staff. However, there would be no limitations on delegations using automatic or semi-automatic translation for documents available in certain languages.

76. The working languages of UNCITRAL are derived from the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, which provide that Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are both the official and the working languages of the General Assembly, including its committees and subcommittees. This multilingual framework applies equally to the documentation, publications and meetings of UNCITRAL.²⁶

77. The General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed the principle of multilingualism and the parity of the six official languages in the context of UNCITRAL's work. It has emphasized that all initiatives affecting working methods, including those involving the use of new technologies or introduced on an experimental basis, must comply with this principle and must not adversely affect the quality or scope of language services provided by the secretariat.²⁷

78. In addition, the General Assembly has stressed the obligation to ensure the simultaneous issuance of documents in all six official languages, both in print and through electronic platforms. It has recalled that these requirements apply fully to UNCITRAL and has reiterated that any evolution in working methods must respect language parity across documentation, publications and meetings.²⁸

F. Administrative Efficiency Measures

79. The secretariat proposes a number of measures aimed at improving efficiency both in terms of time and costs, while preserving transparency and inclusiveness. Some of these measures are intended to streamline the internal workflow of the secretariat, such as communication between offices, use of templates and alike, while others are aimed at streamlining workflows with an impact on States.

1. Note verbale for all WG sessions (first and second half of the year)

80. It is proposed that a single note verbale ("NV"), covering all WG sessions in both the first and second halves of the year, replace the current practice of issuing separate NVs for each WG session. This would reduce duplication and the administrative burden on the secretariat. The NV could also be made available on a website accessible only to permanent missions/Governments.

²⁴ General Assembly resolution [80/161](#) of 15 December 2025, para. 21.

²⁵ See Footnote 10.

²⁶ [A/520/Rev.20](#), rule 51; General Assembly resolution [79/117](#) of 12 December 2024, para. 19.

²⁷ General Assembly resolution [76/268](#) of 21 June 2022, paras. 67 and 70.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, paras. 67, 68 and 70; Report of the Sixth Committee [A/80/448](#) of 24 November 2025, para. 21.

2. Streamlined provisional agenda

81. The provisional agenda prepared in advance of the WGs could be streamlined. Certain items, such as the composition of WGs, could be omitted, as the reports of the WGs contain a reference to the composition of the Commission and include information on attendance. Background sections and references to documents could also be shortened. These changes would reduce preparation time and translation requirements.

G. Efficiency Measures regarding the UNCITRAL Law Library

82. The UNCITRAL Library was significantly affected by post reductions as of early 2026. Two posts (P-3, legal librarian and G-6 library assistant) have been abolished, leaving the library without any dedicated staff. The secretariat is currently maintaining minimum services with a focus on online resources.

83. The secretariat is considering further austerity measures, including discontinuing daily public access to the Library. It has also consulted on the possibility of further operational consolidation with other United Nations library services in Vienna. However, the associated costs and budgetary implications are significant. The secretariat also intends to reconceptualize the Library as the UNCITRAL Research Hub, providing research support to the UNCITRAL secretariat, delegates, observers, and visiting scholars primarily through online resources. The hard-copy collection would be expanded only through donated materials. To avoid storage and postal costs, donors are requested to provide publications either during in-person events or in electronic form (see [A/CN.9/1250/Add.6](#), paras. 2–4).

84. As a consequence of the reduction in Library staff, it is suggested that publication of the UNCITRAL Yearbook²⁹ be discontinued. The secretariat will coordinate with the relevant services to examine whether the material could instead be processed automatically. Given that UNCITRAL is one of the commissions of the General Assembly, such a proposal would, however, require prior consultations with the other commissions in order to ensure a consistent approach across the United Nations system. The matter would therefore require further consideration.

85. In this context, it is suggested that States should support the work of the Library by providing contributions, including in-kind contributions, for example through the secondment of a librarian.

²⁹ The UNCITRAL Yearbook was established following a request by the General Assembly that means be explored to make the results of the Commission's work more widely known and accessible beyond the United Nations forum (General Assembly resolution [2421 \(XXIII\)](#) of 18 December 1968, para. 6(f)). Pursuant to that request, the Secretary-General examined the feasibility and form of such a publication ([A/CN.9/32](#)), after which the General Assembly approved the establishment of the Yearbook in principle (General Assembly resolution [2502 \(XXIV\)](#) of 12 November 1969); [A/CN.9/32/Add.1](#)). The Commission subsequently determined the timing and content of the Yearbook as an annual consolidated record of its work ([A/CN.9/57](#), paras. 1–4).