

Third Intersessional Consultation on Possible Efficiency and Cost-Saving Measures for the Commission's Work

28 April 2026, Vienna / hybrid, 1:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. CET

I. Introduction

1. The coordinator of the consultative process, Liliana Oliva Bernal (Mexico), opened the third intersessional consultation on possible efficiency-enhancing and cost-saving measures for the work of UNCITRAL. She recalled that the purpose of the consultations was to support the Commission in preparing for informed decision-making at its fifty-ninth session, in light of UN-wide budgetary constraints, while safeguarding the quality, inclusiveness and effectiveness of UNCITRAL's work.
2. The Coordinator recalled that the Secretariat had circulated in advance an updated presentation and a revised draft note reflecting discussions to date, including an analysis on participation and overall budget (see also [webpage on cost saving and efficiency with further information](#)). She emphasized that the note remained a working document, and invited participants to submit written comments before 4 May 2026, which was the submission date.

II. Secretariat presentation

3. The Secretariat briefly recalled the background to the consultative process and the main considerations emerging from previous discussions, including the importance of preserving inclusiveness, multilingualism and substantive quality, avoiding cost-shifting to States, and ensuring evidence-based decision-making.
4. The Secretariat summarized the principal proposals under consideration, including possible adjustments to venue rotation between New York and Vienna; the duration and frequency of the Commission and its Working Group sessions; modalities for remote participation; targeted efficiency measures relating to documents and reporting; and on-screen display of legislative texts and reports in English. Updated information on break-down costs, level of participation and constraints relating to conference services and translation capacity was briefly highlighted.

III. Discussion

5. Participants expressed appreciation for the updated information provided by the Secretariat and engaged in a substantive exchange of views. Many participants emphasized the need for clear and quantified financial information on the expected savings with each proposed measure. It was however emphasised that all measures to cut costs and enhance efficiency should avoid compromising UNCITRAL's mandate, as "a powerful UNCITRAL with strong impact" was needed.

A. Venue rotation between New York and Vienna

6. A number of participants expressed support for holding meetings exclusively in Vienna, citing potential cost savings, operational efficiency, developing *in situ* expertise and the benefits of proximity to the Secretariat and conference services. Several of these participants indicated openness to a time-bound suspension of venue rotation, subject to review. It was questioned whether relocating all sessions of the Commission and its Working Group to Vienna was feasible.
7. Other participants stressed the importance of maintaining venue rotation in order to ensure inclusiveness and accessibility. It was noted that participation data

available to date did not fully capture engagement by certain regions, including Pacific Island States and other small or under-represented States, and that considerations of participation should not be based solely on numbers.

8. Several participants emphasized that the constituencies engaging in New York and Vienna were not identical, with New York facilitating participation by permanent missions and experts linked to Sixth Committee processes, while Vienna tended to attract a different set of UNCITRAL specialists. In that regard, it was observed that the use of both venues contributed to greater diversity of participation overall which benefitted the quality of UNCITRAL texts.

B. Duration and frequency of Commission and Working Groups sessions

9. Participants expressed differing views on shortening the duration of the Commission and its Working Group sessions. It was recalled that, due to austerity measures already in place, the Commission would, in practice, test a two-week session format in 2026. It was recalled that, this year, fewer legislative projects would be adopted compared with 2025, such that a shorter Commission session could suffice under the circumstances. However, it was emphasized that flexibility remained important in adapting to the legislative agenda.

10. It was also explained that UNCITRAL had an allocation of 15 weeks under the regular budget of the United Nations. While some participants acknowledged possible efficiency gains from shortening sessions, many cautioned that sufficient meeting time was necessary to ensure inclusive participation and well-prepared negotiations, and warned against the quasi-definitive nature of reducing the Commission's 15-week allocation.

11. Participants also recalled that flexibility had already been exercised in recent practice, including the cancellation of the April session of Working Group IV and the use of Working Group I meeting time for colloquia rather than formal negotiations. These examples were cited as both evidence of responsiveness to resource constraints and a reason to proceed cautiously before adopting further systemic reductions.

C. Remote participation and meeting modalities

12. Participants widely recognized the value of remote "listen-in" participation as a tool to enhance transparency and inclusiveness, to promote high level of engagement, facilitate consensus building and foster stronger ownership of negotiated outcomes, particularly for capital-based experts and delegations with limited travel resources. At the same time, many reiterated that formal participation in negotiations and decision-making should remain in person, in accordance with United Nations rules.

13. It was clarified that remote participation limited to observation ("listen-in") was distinct from full hybrid participation, which would entail the same rights to intervene and take part in decision-making as in-person participants, and would require a decision by the General Assembly.

14. Some participants cautioned that full hybrid participation could act as a deterrent to in-person attendance, potentially weakening the dynamics and effectiveness of negotiations. Concern was also expressed that, due to time-zone differences, delegates might in practice be unable to participate meaningfully if full hybrid modalities were relied upon.

D. On-screen text in English only and report adoption

15. Several participants supported the display on-screen text for the negotiations of texts and report adoption, noting potential gains in efficiency and clarity, without prejudice to multilingualism. Several of these participants indicated that the test of this proposal during the upcoming Committee should take place during the whole session, not only for the adoption of the report, as proposed by the Secretariat.

16. Other participants expressed concern that reliance on on-screen text in a single language could affect multilingualism and cautioned against extending such practices to substantive legislative negotiations.

E. Documents, reporting and translation

17. There was broad support for efforts to shorten and consolidate non-legislative documents, streamline agendas and reduce duplication, provided that transparency, institutional memory and accessibility were preserved.

18. Participants acknowledged constraints facing conference and translation services and expressed general willingness to adapt working methods, while stressing the importance of the timely availability of documents in all official languages.

19. Regarding the UNCITRAL Law Library, several delegations expressed the need for a strong library and called upon States to provide contributions including the secondment of a librarian.

IV. Next steps

20. The Secretariat was requested to further revise the draft in light of the discussion and written inputs, if submitted before 4 May, and to submit a consolidated document for consideration by the Commission at its fifty-ninth session.

21. The Coordinator thanked participants and the Secretariat for their constructive engagement and closed the meeting.