



**UNCITRAL's preparatory work on enabling end-to-end
trade digitalization and paperless trade**

Concept note

Background: At its fifty-eighth session, in 2025, the Commission considered a note by the secretariat on the stocktaking of UNCITRAL texts, which included a discussion of UNCITRAL texts and paperless trade ([A/CN.9/1226](#), paras. 65-87), as well as a proposal by the Russian Federation on possible future work on legal aspects of paperless trade ([A/CN.9/1234](#)). After discussion, the Commission requested the secretariat to continue its preparatory work on enabling end-to-end trade digitalization and paperless trade, emphasizing a step-by-step approach to the work. In that regard, it was agreed that a colloquium could be held to explore the use of UNCITRAL electronic commerce texts for paperless trade with a view to presenting guidance text and possible model legislation on paperless trade to the Commission for consideration at its next session ([A/80/17](#), paras. 238-245).

The initiative aims to provide additional insight on the features of an enabling legal framework for paperless trade, including by identifying any legislative gap, for consideration by the Commission. Given the broad scope of application of UNCITRAL texts, such as the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Commerce (1996), the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (MLETR) (2017), and the UNCITRAL Model Law on the Use and Cross-border Recognition of Identity Management and Trust Services (MLIT) (2022), an enabling legal framework may already be established based on existing texts.

The core issues that have emerged during the exploratory and preparatory work and the discussion at the Commission relate, on the one hand, to cross-border recognition of data and documents and, on the other hand, to the satisfaction of requirements for the submission of trade and trade-related documents and data to public entities dealing with trade regulation, typically through a single window facility for import and export operations.

The current phase of preparatory work also takes into account recent documents outlining policy and practical issues related to paperless trade.¹

¹ See, e.g., Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, [The Digitalisation of Trade Documents and Processes: Going Paperless Today, Going Paperless Tomorrow](#), OECD Trade Policy Paper N°297 (Paris, 2025); Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, [A Practical Guide to Cross-Border Facilitation](#) (Vienna, 2025).



United Nations
Commission on International Trade Law

Colloquium overview: In line with the Commission's request, the secretariat is organizing a Colloquium on Digital Payments and Paperless Trade (Vienna, 19-22 January 2026), with the part on paperless trade (21-22 January 2026) discussing the following topics:

- (a) Experiences and challenges in establishing an enabling legal framework for paperless trade;
- (b) Cross-border recognition of electronic documents, data and identity management based on UNCITRAL texts, namely the MLIT and MLETR;
- (c) Specific challenges arising from exchanging trade and trade-related documents and data with public entities;
- (d) Regional perspectives and experiences of single-window platforms for submitting trade documents; and
- (e) Private sector practices and needs.

The discussions will bring together a diverse range of experts and practitioners from international and regional organizations, governments, academia as well as the private sector and other entities to discuss different legal aspects of paperless trade.

The Colloquium will be complemented by webinars discussing related topics, such as policy options for paperless trade and their legal implications, and the progress towards common legal and technical standards for digital trade.

The findings of the Colloquium, as well as of other preparatory work conducted by the secretariat, will be presented to the Commission at its fifty-ninth session for further consideration and guidance on possible next steps.

More information about UNCITRAL and the Colloquium on Digital Payments and Paperless Trade is available at:

uncitral.un.org

<https://uncitral.un.org/en/paymentspaperlesstrade>