

REPORT ON THE UNCITRAL ACADEMY 2024

24 April 2025



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**SINGAPORE
CONVENTION
ON MEDIATION**

On 7 August 2019, ministers and senior officials representing 70 countries, and 1,500 delegates in total, convened in Singapore to commemorate the signing of the Singapore Convention on Mediation.

46 States signed the Convention on the day it opened for signature, the highest number of first-day signatories of a UN trade convention to-date.

57 States have signed and 17 States have become Party to the Convention.

**UNCITRAL
ACADEMY**

The UNCITRAL Academy, jointly launched in 2019 by UNCITRAL and the Ministry of Law of Singapore, promotes the development, understanding and use of **international dispute resolution** methods and instruments.

The UNCITRAL Academy has:

- **Raised awareness** of UNCITRAL instruments and ongoing work at UNCITRAL among government and industry users
- **Convened leaders** from governments and legal and business communities around the world to examine the latest trends in international dispute resolution globally
- **Provided training** in international mediation and the Singapore Convention on Mediation

The 2024 edition of the Singapore Convention Week brought together over 5,600 participants from all over the world.

The UNCITRAL Academy is a dynamic and vibrant event, with global reach, and the 2024 edition is its 5th edition, as part of the Singapore Convention Week.

Introduction

1. This report on the 2024 edition of the UNCITRAL Academy, co-organised by the Singapore Ministry of Law and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), provides a summary of the objectives, deliverables and outcomes of the event. This builds upon the groundwork laid in previous years and captures details of the continuing conversations following the 2023 edition. Testimonials from participants, recaps of related events, and key reflections are also set out below.

Secretariat Support

2. The UNCITRAL Secretariat worked closely with the Singapore Ministry of Law and contributed their expertise to co-design and organise the Academy. Their expertise facilitated the curation of key discussion topics that are relevant to the international dispute resolution community, in particular ensuring alignment with the exploratory work undertaken by UNCITRAL. Additionally, the Secretariat provided invaluable support to the Academy through their participation in speeches and live panel discussions on UNCITRAL's work. They also actively improved the reach and visibility of the Academy through their membership channels and industry networks.

Updates from the UNCITRAL Academy 2024

3. The UNCITRAL Academy 2024, which comprised a Conference and two Capacity-Building Workshops, was held from 26 to 30 August. It formed part of the Singapore Convention Week 2024, a week-long series of legal and dispute resolution events. The Conference and Industry Capacity-Building Workshop (Fig. 1) were held in a hybrid format, while both sessions of the Government Workshops were fully virtual. In total, the Week brought together over 5,600 participants from all over the world, representing the legal, business and Government sectors.

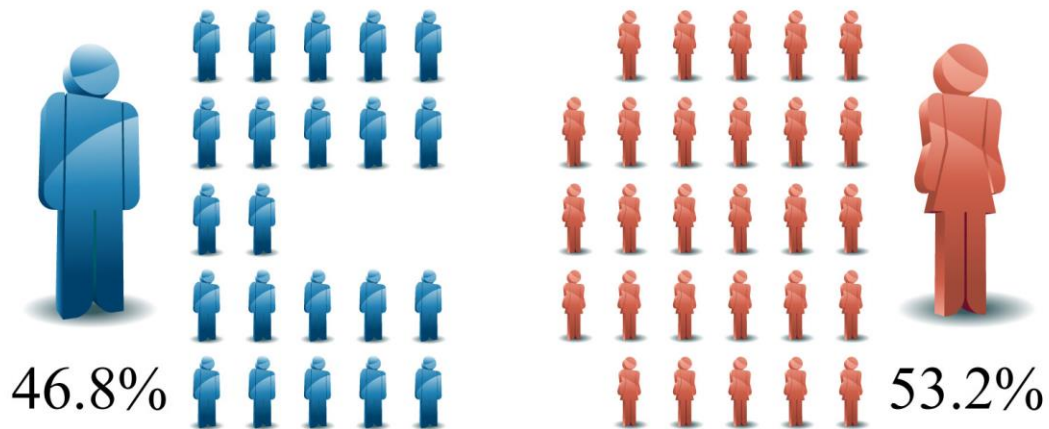


Fig. 1

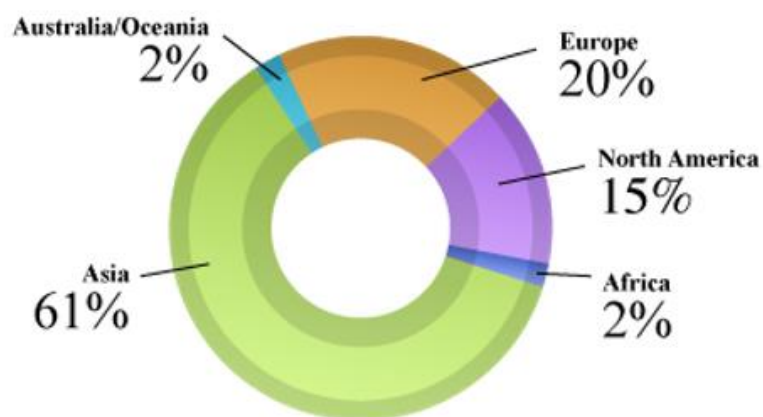
4. Each iteration of the UNCITRAL Academy, save the first edition in 2019, has been characterised by a specific theme that serves to inspire and provoke thoughtful discussion:
 - a. The UNCITRAL Academy 2021, themed “**A World in Transition**”, took place virtually and focused on how the global pandemic had affected businesses globally and how dispute resolution had evolved accordingly through new mechanisms and technology.
 - b. The UNCITRAL Academy 2022, themed “**Embracing Global Change, Navigating New Possibilities**”, saw the return of a full in-person audience in Singapore. It was centred on the current trends and challenges in cross-border dispute resolution amidst the quick-changing global landscape and recent breakthroughs in dispute resolution practice.
 - c. The UNCITRAL Academy 2023 was themed “**Tomorrow’s World Today: Leading the Future of Dispute Resolution**”. It showcased prominent thought leaders and focused on discussions aimed at driving meaningful change and addressing the complexities of new challenges in dispute resolution.

5. Building on these conversations, the UNCITRAL Academy 2024 was themed “**Separating Disruptions from Distractions in an Evolving World**”. It highlighted how strategic planning and a persistent curiosity, bolstered by technological expertise, are integral to avoid being caught unawares by each new disruption in today’s evolving world but at the same time, avoid being unnecessarily burdened by mere distractions. The Academy programme featured distinguished thought leaders who shared insightful reflections and innovative strategies for the future through a breadth of sessions including:
 - a. Keynote addresses and remarks by senior Government and UNCITRAL officials;
 - b. A fireside chat on the key challenges and trends in the legal industry;
 - c. Panel discussions on generative AI in dispute resolution, net zero disputes, and mentorship for the next generation of disputes practitioners;
 - d. A friendly debate on whether women are better mediators, but men are better arbitrators; and
 - e. Two capacity-building workshops focusing on industry and Government users.

6. Dispute resolution remains a matter of global interest, with widespread relevance across industries and societies. Thus, diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility continue to be key hallmarks of the Academy, with panellists and participants hailing from around the world. The following graphics provide a snapshot of the speakers' and audience profiles for the two-day event:
- a. There was gender balance across all the speakers and moderators at the Academy that showcased thought leaders and practitioners from around the world.



Gender representation for speakers and moderators

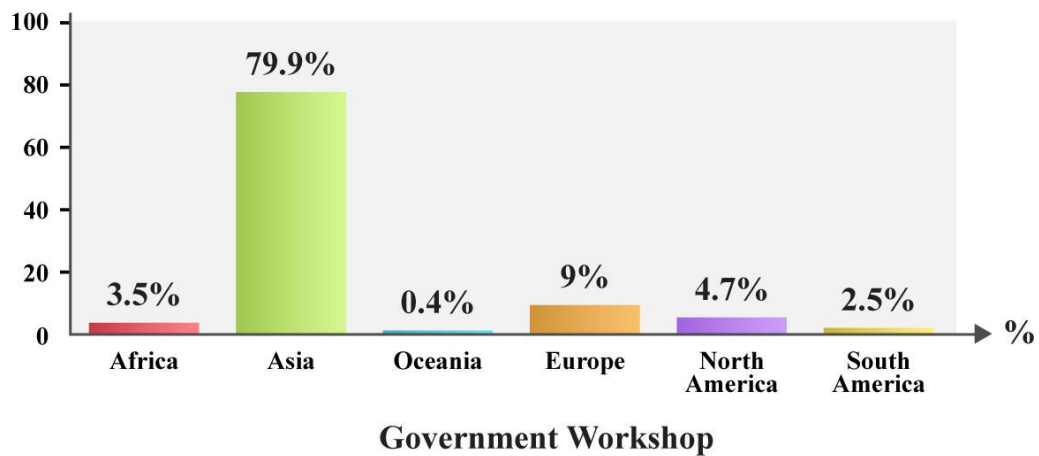


Geographical breakdown of speakers and moderators

- b. Attendees for the Conference and Industry Capacity-Building Workshop were evenly split between in-person and online audiences, with comparative geographical spread. With the normalisation of and growing demand for virtual experiences, the UNCITRAL Academy 2024 maintained a comparable number of online participants as the 2023 iteration (5 in 10).



- c. The Government Workshop was conducted over 2 sessions in 2024. Both sessions were held virtually, for easier access to participants from around the world. Participants hailed from a diversity of regions in different time zones.



UNCITRAL Academy Conference and Industry Capacity-Building Workshop 2024

Welcome Address

7. Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law **Mr K Shanmugam SC** delivered the Welcome Address at the opening of the UNCITRAL Academy (Fig. 2).
8. Against the backdrop of geopolitical and economic challenges, he highlighted the importance of ignoring distractions while dealing with disruptions to move ahead in a world that is everchanging and more complex. Such uncertain periods emphasise the need for all countries to continue upholding multilateralism and a rules-based international order.
9. In this regard, Singapore actively supports and tries to do what we can within our means, (a) to advance international legal instruments and frameworks, (b) to advocate the maintenance of an open economy, stable governance, and robust legal frameworks, and (c) to promote international trade and investment flows.
10. The Singapore Convention Week is one example. He hoped to build on this momentum to have more countries come on board to ratify the Convention to further this framework and facilitate the enforcement of mediated settlement agreements for the international community, thereby increasing confidence in the effectiveness of cross-border commercial dispute resolution, which would in turn result in more trade flows.



Fig. 2

Opening remarks

11. **Ms Anna Joubin-Bret**, Secretary of UNCITRAL (Fig. 3), gave the opening remarks to open the UNCITRAL Academy Conference 2024. She highlighted that the Singapore Convention Week has been a vital forum for exchange by providing a platform to facilitate collaboration and problem solving for future challenges in the realm of international trade and dispute resolution. She acknowledged the sustained efforts and discussions to spark ideas, acquire new perspectives, and develop thought leadership. She reflected on how discussions had at the Conference in previous years have furthered the UNCITRAL Secretariat's exploratory work and supported Commission sessions. These included contributions to the work of UNCITRAL Working Group II concerning the recognition and enforcement of e-awards, the adoption of new international legal texts and model clauses, and encouragement for continued support of existing international conventions. She concluded her remarks by reiterating UNCITRAL's commitment to support the Singapore Convention Week as a space to foster a sense of community and shared purpose among stakeholders, reinforcing the importance of collective action in enhancing the global legal landscape, and building the momentum needed to ensure the adoption and implementation of international legal standards.



Fig. 3

Panel Discussion on Forging Ahead in the Digital Economy – Generative AI in Dispute Resolution

12. The first panel discussed the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in dispute resolution. The panel comprised:
 - a. **Ms Eliza Jiang**, CEO & Founder, Lawdify;
 - b. **Professor Daniel Martin Katz**, Professor of Law, Illinois Tech, Chicago-Kent College of Law;
 - c. **Mr Jeth Lee**, Chief Legal Officer, Microsoft Singapore;
 - d. And was moderated by **Mr Christopher Gregory Lewin**, AI Asia Pacific Lead, Deloitte.
13. The panel shared how traditional AI differed from GenAI, and that the latter offers many more potential use cases in dispute resolution. The panel highlighted the need for law firms to be equipped with the relevant GenAI expertise to meaningfully develop and deploy such technology, while being able to recognise the corresponding limitations.
14. Regulatory guidelines on the use of GenAI must be developed in tandem. The panel explained that these challenges include how law firms should safeguard the confidentiality of their clients' data in GenAI models, even while the data may reside in external servers of enterprise-grade models which are not owned by the law firms. Lawyers have the responsibility to be accountable for their clients' data as professionals.
15. There were many questions from the audience, including the role of humans in the advent of GenAI. The panel agreed that beyond GenAI's sole application in legal work, GenAI can also be used as a productive educational tool. Furthermore, suggestions were made regarding issues that could benefit from a harmonized legislative approach. These discussions directly contributed to the ongoing exploratory work of the UNCITRAL Secretariat, focusing on the implications of AI on international trade and legal frameworks.



Fig. 4

Panel Discussion on Net Zero Disputes – Aspiration or Inspiration?

16. On the topic of net zero disputes, the panel comprised:
 - a. **Ms Belinda Ellington**, Consultant Solicitor; Senior Advisor, International Emissions Trading Association (IETA); Mediator, Mediation1st;
 - b. **Ms Amanda Lees**, Partner, King & Wood Mallesons;
 - c. **Ms Khushboo Shahdadpuri**, Senior Counsel, Al Tamimi & Company;
 - d. And was moderated by **Dr Georgina Tsagas**, Associate Mediator, Civil Mediation Council, The Barrister Group; Solicitor, England & Wales
17. The panel started by explaining how the concept of net zero has expanded in scope and how net zero disputes have become increasingly complex. The concept no longer revolves solely around carbon dioxide but also includes other greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide.
18. With a growing focus on the environment, the panel discussed how more green activists are bringing claims such as greenwashing against companies. The introduction of nascent and innovative technologies such as carbon capture will also evolve the nature of net zero disputes.
19. The panel noted that countries will see an increasing number of net zero disputes and that it will be a challenge to balance between environmental and business considerations. This is an area of opportunity for mediation to play a role in such disputes.



Fig. 5

Industry Capacity-Building Workshop

20. Titled “The Best of Both Worlds: Mediation in Arbitration”, the Industry Capacity-Building Workshop, supported by the Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC), was held as part of the afternoon programme of the UNCITRAL Academy Conference. With case studies and real-life anecdotes, the workshop discussed mixed-mode dispute resolution frameworks and explored how mediation, when utilised alongside other appropriate dispute resolution, expands opportunities and solutions.
21. Speakers at the workshop were:
- Mr Edwin Glasgow CBE KC**, Arbitrator & Mediator, 39 Essex Chambers;
 - Professor Andrea Hulbert**, International Arbitrator, Mediator & Adjudicator; Founding Partner, Hulbert Volio Abogados;
 - Ms Koh Swee Yen SC**, Partner, WongPartnership LLP;
 - Mr Sun Wei**, Managing Partner, Zhong Lun Law Firm;
 - And was moderated by **Justice Lavu Nageswara Rao**, Arbitrator & Mediator, 39 Essex Chambers



Fig. 6

Panel Discussion on Nurturing the Next Generation – From Mentorship to Stewardship

22. The third panel saw panellists discussing the importance of law firms nurturing their greatest asset - the next generation of legal practitioners. The panel covered both formal and informal mentorship structures. They discussed how mentors and mentorship programmes support young lawyers and develop long-term advocates for law firms. They acknowledged the demanding nature of legal practice presented challenges for young associates who may struggle to find time for mentorship.
23. The panellists highlighted the importance of building community and networks with other likeminded legal practitioners. They also recognised the positive impact of targeted mentorship programmes focusing on specific practice or interest areas, minority and marginalised communities (e.g. practitioners that are female and/or of ethnic minorities), and in unconventional mentorship structures. The panellists also discussed best practices in mentorship, including access to mental health professionals, discussions on alternative career paths, and education to empower individuals to take ownership of their own mental health and professional development. They concluded the discussion by sharing their views on building a climate of mentorship across the industry.
24. The panel comprised:
 - a. **Ms Setyawati Fitrianggraeni**, Managing Partner, Anggraeni and Partners;
 - b. **Ms Yoshimi Ohara**, Partner at Nagashima Ohno & Tsunematsu;
 - c. **Mr Brian Potts**, Co-founder, The Legal Mentor Network and Partner, Husch Blackwell;
 - d. **Ms Bridget Tatham**, Partner, Browne Jacobson;
 - e. And was moderated by **Dr Michael Hwang SC**, Managing Director, Michael Hwang Chambers LLC.



Fig. 7

Fireside Chat with Professor David Wilkins moderated by Ms Sharon Ong

25. Next up was a fireside chat with **Professor David Wilkins**, Lester Kissel Professor of Law and Faculty Director at the Center on the Legal Profession at the Harvard Law School. The chat was moderated by **Ms Sharon Ong**, Director-General, Ministry of Law, Singapore (Fig. 5).
26. During the chat, Professor Wilkins shared his insights on emerging issues, experimentation with technology, innovation and the future of the legal industry. He highlighted the impact of new technology and artificial intelligence (AI), data protection concerns, globalisation, rising powers around the world, sustainability, diversity and inclusion as examples of key disruptors to monitor.
27. Professor Wilkins acknowledged that navigating ethical concerns and human value-add will also become increasingly relevant for the next generation of legal practitioners. He shared that legal education, and professional training must evolve to better prepare law students to be adaptable and responsive to new technologies. This would facilitate the integration of law into multi-faceted solutions for businesses and cultivate a culture of problem-solving amongst young lawyers.
28. Professor Wilkins ended the chat by advocating for more integration of law with other disciplines. He left participants with a reminder that technologies like AI are mere reflections of prior human knowledge and training, but active legal practice has always been uniquely connected to human nature which is imparted to young practitioners through teachings on core values from the heart.



Fig. 8

Debate

29. The last segment of the conference again took the form of a lively debate, in the second iteration of the UNCITRAL Academy Debate where two teams of senior dispute resolution practitioners pit their wits and knowledge against each other. The debate motion for this year was “Women are Better Mediators, but Men are Better Arbitrators”.



Fig. 9

30. The teams – “Gen Why” and “The Diversely Challenged” – took turns to present their case for and against the motion, respectively. Having heard the teams’ arguments, the debate was determined by an audience vote, with “The Diversely Challenged” declared the winners.
31. “Gen Why”, the proposition team that argued for the motion comprised:
- Mr Daryl Chew**, Partner, Three Crowns LLP;
 - Mr Madhukeshwar Desai**, Founder & CEO, Mumbai Centre for International Arbitration; and
 - Ms Mariana Zhong**, Partner, Hui Zhong Law Firm.
32. “The Diversely Challenged”, the opposition team that argued against the motion comprised:
- Ms Lee Seung Min**, Partner, Peter & Kim, Singapore;
 - Mr Siraj Omar SC**, Managing Director, Dispute Resolution, Drew & Napier LLC; and
 - Ms Lara Quie**, Senior Director – Forensic & Litigation Consulting EMEA, FTI Consulting.

33. The debate was ably moderated by **Mr Jern-Fei Ng KC**, Duxton Hill Chambers (Singapore Group Practice) and Temple Chambers (Hong Kong SAR). He concluded the debate with the observation that despite each gender's unique strengths, practical experience instead of biological gender takes center stage in shaping a practitioner's abilities.



Fig. 10

UNCITRAL Academy Government Capacity-Building Workshop

34. This year's UNCITRAL Academy Government Capacity-Building Workshop was supported by the Singapore International Dispute Resolution Academy (SIDRA) and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). To open the Workshop, welcome remarks were delivered by:
- Dr Judith Knieper**, Legal Officer, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law;
 - Jasmine Chin-Sabado**, Director-General (International & Advisory), Ministry of Law, Singapore;
 - Professor Nadja Alexander**, Professor of Law and Director, Singapore International Dispute Resolution Academy, Singapore Management University; and
 - Frauke Nitschke**, Senior Counsel and Team Leader, International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.



Fig. 11

35. The Workshop comprised two virtual sessions, both of which enjoyed active audience engagement through an online Q&A function. Session 1 was an open-door workshop which covered issues relating to the use of mediation to resolve disputes involving States and the enforcement of mediated settlement agreements. Session 2 was a by-invitation only session for working-level Government officials around the world

36. In Session 1, a diverse expert panel discussed developments surrounding the use of mediation in resolving disputes involving States. They canvassed trends in the use of mediation in investor-State disputes, and shared data on the key features of investment mediations that had taken place. The panel also explored why States should consider using mediation in investor-State disputes, and the key questions to be considered in the use of mediation in matters involving States, including when parties should consider mediation for their disputes.



Fig. 12

37. Session 1 was moderated by Mariam Gotsiridze, Principal Research Fellow, Singapore International Dispute Resolution Academy, Singapore Management University. She was accompanied by the following speakers:
- e. **Professor Shahla Ali**, Professor and Associate Dean (International); Director, LLM in Arbitration and Dispute Resolution, Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong;
 - f. **Dr Judith Knieper**, Legal Officer, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law;
 - g. **George Lim SC**, Chairman, Singapore International Mediation Centre;
 - h. **Dr Lars Markert**, Partner, International Dispute Resolution, Nishimura & Asahi (Gaikokuho Kyodo Jigyo); and
 - i. **Blanca Salas-Ferrer**, Legal Officer, Directorate-General for Trade, European Commission.
38. Between sessions, Professor Alexander conducted a short presentation on compliance with, and enforcing, mediated settlement agreements. During this presentation, she provided a primer on the Singapore Convention on Mediation, and explored how the Convention strengthens the efficacy of mediated outcomes.

39. Session 2 comprised two segments. The first segment involved panellists from the governments of several jurisdictions as well as a representative of a national law commission, who shared their countries' experiences and steps taken towards becoming Party to the Convention. Through the experiences and thoughtful insights of the panellists, this segment drew out the policy incentives for jurisdictions to become Party to the Singapore Convention, and how jurisdictions are overcoming challenges that may be faced in doing so.
40. This panel was moderated by Professor Nadja Alexander, and she was accompanied by the following speakers:
- His Excellency Ayaz BAETOV**, Minister of Justice, Kyrgyz Republic;
 - Amaka Gold Elom**, Deputy Director, International and Comparative Law Department; Team Lead, Migration & Trade, Federal Ministry of Justice, Nigeria;
 - Tim Schnabel**, Executive Director, Uniform Law Commission; Former United States State Department Attorney and Lead Negotiator for Singapore Convention; and
 - Shahzar Ilahi**, Program Delivery, Specialist, Legal Aid Society, Co-founder and Associate Director of the Musaliha International Centre for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (MICADR), Pakistan.



Fig. 13

41. The second segment of Session 2 comprised of a discussion between practitioners, who, through a mock case scenario, discussed potential strategies for States to engage in investor-State mediation with foreign investors. They explored the role of mediation in early-stage relationship management with investors; stakeholder engagement; institutional readiness; and authorising negotiators and approving settlements.

42. The session was moderated by Dr Mark McLaughlin, Visiting Assistant Professor, Singapore International Dispute Resolution Academy, Singapore Management University, and Frauke Nitschke, Senior Counsel and Team Leader, International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
43. They were joined by the following practitioners on the panel:
- Professor Lawrence Boo**, Head of Chambers, The Arbitration Chambers;
 - Amal Bouchenaki**, Partner, Herbert Smith Freehills New York (attending virtually);
 - Fahira Brodlija**, Rule of Law Advisor for Investor-State Dispute Settlement Reform, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit; and
 - Bill Marsh**, International Mediator and ICSID Conciliator (Chairman's Panel).

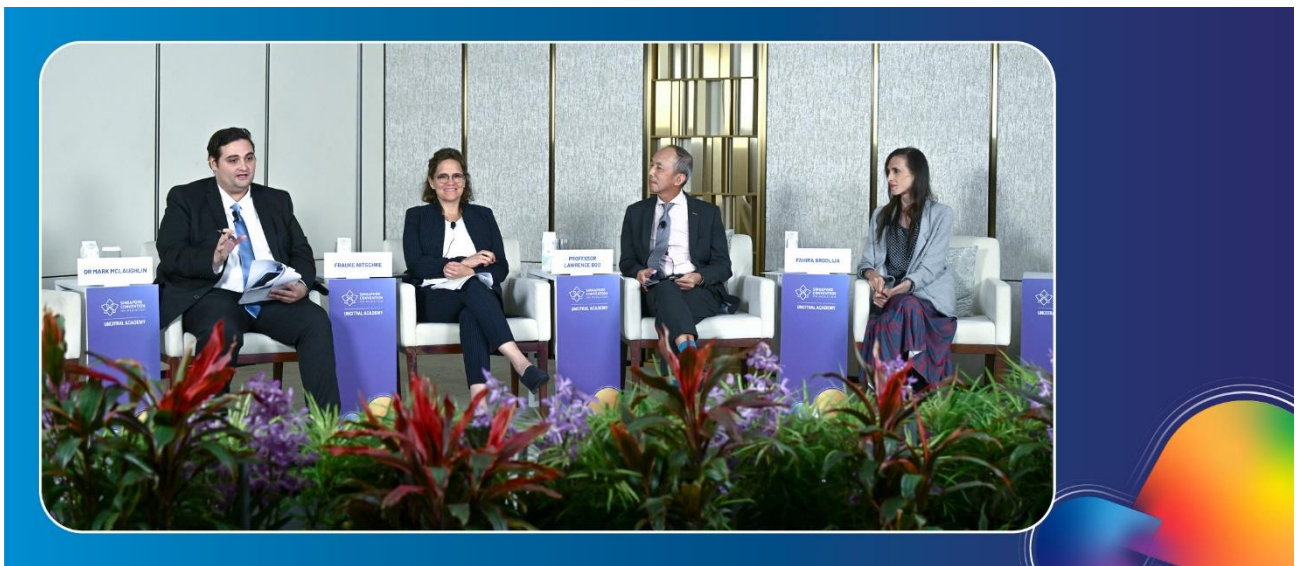


Fig. 14

Concluding Remarks

44. The UNCITRAL Academy continues to serve as a strong statement of the organisers' commitment to multilateralism, diversity, and support for UNCITRAL's work. It is envisaged that future editions of the Academy will sustain the forward-thinking momentum generated through these insightful conversations and build upon the foundations laid for a constantly evolving world.
45. More information, including videos of the UNCITRAL Academy highlights, events and panel discussions are available at <https://www.singaporeconventionweek.sg/>.

Testimonials

Ms Belinda Ellington, Consultant Solicitor; Senior Advisor, International Emissions Trading Association; Mediator, Mediation 1st: It's been absolutely fascinating. I've met some great people on the stage and off the stage as well... In three words I'd say it's been edifying, inspiring and very good fun. Edifying, I've learned a lot. You learn these things in a vacuum but you don't know what you don't know until you come and listen to people who are experts in their fields. So that's why it's been edifying. Inspiring, I've always thought that mediation was an extremely good method of resolving disputes in the very complex area of climate action and I'm now inspired that I think my assumption was correct and I'm very keen to go ahead and try and implement those. And fun, there's some great people here. Dip your toe in, come and have a go. You've got nothing to lose.

Mr Madhukeshwar Desai, Founder & CEO, Mumbai Centre for International Arbitration: The lineup for the SC week is fantastic. I've seen that there are institutions of repute from across the world that have come together; individuals and friends from different jurisdictions. It gives you a flavour of different places and different issues that are affecting the world right here in one place in Singapore and it's very convenient, it's very well thought out, I really enjoyed it.

Mr Christopher Gregory Lewin, AI Asia Pacific Lead, Deloitte: It's really just the diversity of people who are here from around the region, around the globe. Interesting to see everyone's interest and passion in exploring these topics, which are so important to the future of dispute resolution and the legal practice in general.

Dr Georgina Tsagas, Associate Mediator, Civil Mediation Council, The Barrister Group; Solicitor, England & Wales: My role as moderator in our discussion of such an important and timely issue, namely Net-Zero Disputes, constitutes not only a personal professional milestone, but mainly a truly significant opportunity to contribute in an impactful way to critical discussions taking place on an international level.

Ms Shanti Abraham, Founder, Shanti Abraham & Associates: The UNCITRAL Academy Workshop and Conference is a place where all of us, who have been believers in mediation for so many years come together and I am really looking forward to learning from everyone. We have just come through some really interesting sessions. We are moving the boundaries of where mediation can work, ESG, climate change and I think there is a lot more that mediation will be able to contribute to.

Anggraeni and Partners: Our Managing Partner, Setyawati Fitrianggraeni, had the opportunity to share her insights at the UNCITRAL Academy 2024. During the event, she emphasized the crucial role of mentorship in shaping successful legal careers. We are proud to be part of such an inspiring and forward-thinking discussion on the future of law.

Ms Lenny Rahman, Partner, HLR Law: This is my fourth time attending in-person and it is always the first day, the opening ceremony, the glamorous feel of the (event). It does feel like attending the Emmys, but it is all for the lawyers and the dispute resolution (practitioners).

Mr Senthil Dayalan, Partner, Dentons Rodyk & Davidson LLP: The networking session, Breaking with Convention, that generally tends to be the highlight for me because everyone around the world descends on Singapore for Convention Week, and this networking session is one of those times where you really get to meet everyone.

About the Organisers

Singapore Ministry of Law



The mission of the [Singapore Ministry of Law](#) is to advance access to justice, the rule of law, the economy and society through policy, law and services. Amongst other key roles, the Ministry oversees the policy for development, promotion and regulation of Singapore's legal sector to strengthen Singapore's position as a leading international legal services and dispute resolution hub, and promotes and protects Singapore's interests through cooperation and engagement with key international and regional organisations and bilateral partners on a range of international legal policy issues, including transnational criminal and civil justice.

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law



The [United Nations Commission on International Trade Law](#) is the core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law. A legal body with universal membership specialising in commercial law reform worldwide for over 50 years, UNCITRAL's business is the modernisation and harmonisation of rules on international business.