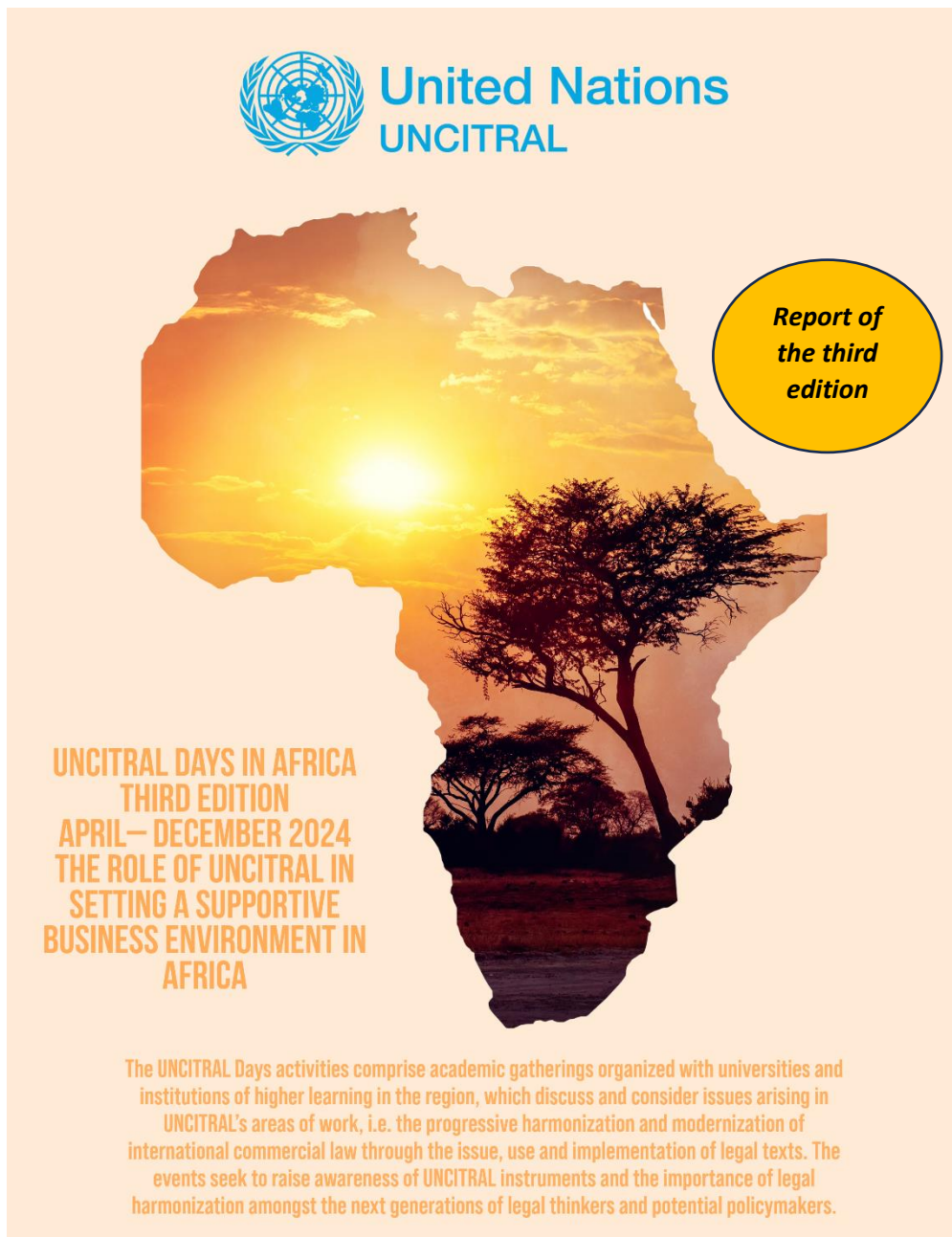


# Report of the third edition of UNCITRAL Days in Africa

## *The role of UNCITRAL in setting a supportive business environment in Africa*



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## Introduction

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

## Background of the UNCITRAL Days series

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

regions, the first edition of the UNCITRAL Days in the Arab States was successfully launched in 2024 after a pilot in 2023.

9. The UNCITRAL Days initiative in the 4 regions have reached, and continues to reach, many thousands of participants (students, professors, researchers, practitioners and sometimes even government officials). Many of them noted that the deliverables (lectures, presentations, focused workshops, etc.) have had a positive impact in terms of capacity-building provided to public and private stakeholders with the ultimate result of increasing awareness of UNCITRAL work and of international trade law issues in general. The annual UNCITRAL Days have also led to an increased participation to UNCITRAL's work by States of these four regions and assisted them in their consideration of UNCITRAL texts.

## The third edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa: key highlights

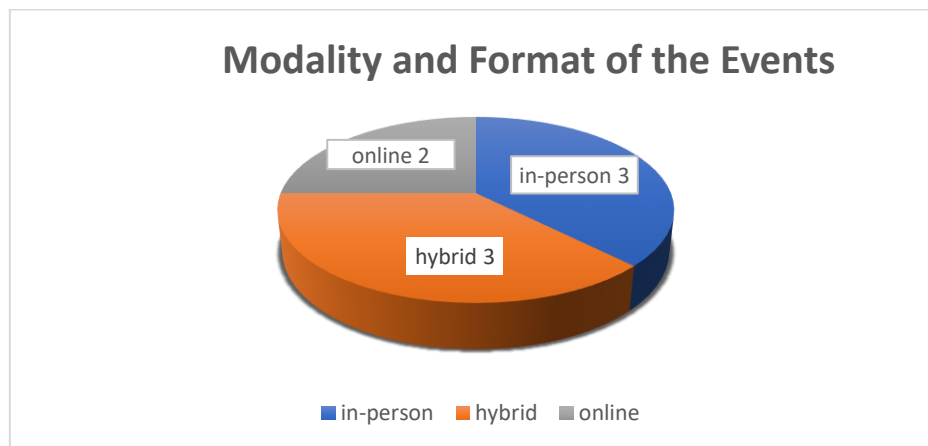
### *List of Events, Hosting Institutions and Countries*

Ref#	Country	Partner organization	Dates (all in 2024 except as noted) <sup>1</sup>	Topic	Language
1	Angola	Agostinho Neto University	13 February 2025	UNCITRAL, Arbitration, Mediation	Portuguese
2	Botswana	Botswana University	6 November	UNCITRAL, Insolvency, Procurement, Alternative Dispute Resolution, International Sale of Goods	English
3	Cameroon	Dschang University	6 December	Digital Economy	French
4	Comoros	Comoros University	25-26 November	Digital Economy	French
5	Kenya	Nairobi University	21 November	Insolvency	English
6	Nigeria	Uyo University	18 November	UNCITRAL, Arbitration, International Sale of Goods	English
7	Sierra Leone	Njala University	14-15 November	Digital economy	English
8	South Africa	Venda University	21 February 2025	UNCITRAL	English

<sup>1</sup> Most of the events of the third edition were held in 2024, but two events were held in early 2025. Notwithstanding, they are part of the third edition since they were discussed and planned during 2024 and held under the theme chosen for the third edition.

### *Format of the events and support of the UNCITRAL secretariat*

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



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

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

13. In all events, efforts were made to present UNCITRAL online courses<sup>2</sup> to participating students so that they could deepen their knowledge and understanding of UNCITRAL texts covered by those courses.

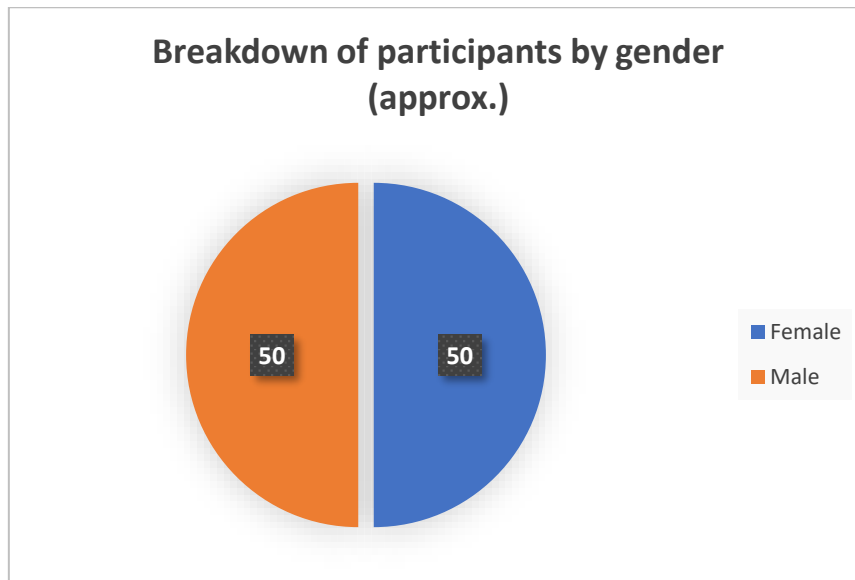
14. On a total of eight events, five were held in English, two in French and one in Portuguese. The UNCITRAL secretariat was able to provide support in all those languages directly or through assistance of experts, with the result of enhancing regional accessibility and multilingualism of the UNCITRAL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

<sup>2</sup> <https://uncitral.un.org/en/onlinecourses>.

### ***Participation, audience diversity and gender parity***

15. Altogether, the eight activities of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa reached over 650 synchronous participants (many events were livestreamed on separate platforms and therefore it is difficult to assess the exact number of total participants). Partner institutions from the following States were already participating to the previous editions of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa: Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa. Partner institutions from the following States joined for the first time: Angola, Botswana and Comoros.

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



17. While most activities were geared towards law students and academic community in the hosting institution, three events (in Cameroon, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) were broadcasted online or were hybrid, thus allowing remote participation including from students, academia and others interested from other countries.

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

### ***Main takeaways from events held during the third edition***

19. The chosen overarching theme for the third edition of UNCITRAL Days in Africa was: “*The role of UNCITRAL in setting a supportive business environment in Africa*”. Recent economic outlook for the African continent highlighted that a weak business environment

poses a risk to economic growth of Africa.<sup>3</sup> A legal framework that, among others, stimulates private sector development and innovation reduces transaction costs and empowers women is urgently needed. UNCITRAL, with its mandate to further the progressive harmonization and modernization of the law of international trade, and its texts play a key role in developing such a framework.

20. The following trends can be identified from the discussion held during the third edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa:

- a. Strong interest for UNCITRAL texts on e-commerce and in particular for the Taxonomy of legal issues related to the digital economy prepared by the UNCITRAL secretariat,<sup>4</sup> in the context of the finalization of the Digital Trade Protocol to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement, adopted on 18 February 2024.
- b. The need to consider for enactment across Africa of more recent UNCITRAL texts on alternative dispute resolution, to adapt to digitalization and reflect investor-State dispute settlement (ISDS) reform.
- c. The challenges faced in the implementation of UNCITRAL texts and the need for additional capacity-building activities, e.g., for the judiciary.
- d. The importance of UNCITRAL online courses for institutions of higher learning, including their students, doctoral candidates and professors, to learn more about the work of UNCITRAL and its texts.
- e. The desirability for more African States to follow closely and participate actively to the work of UNCITRAL.

### ***Supporting progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals***

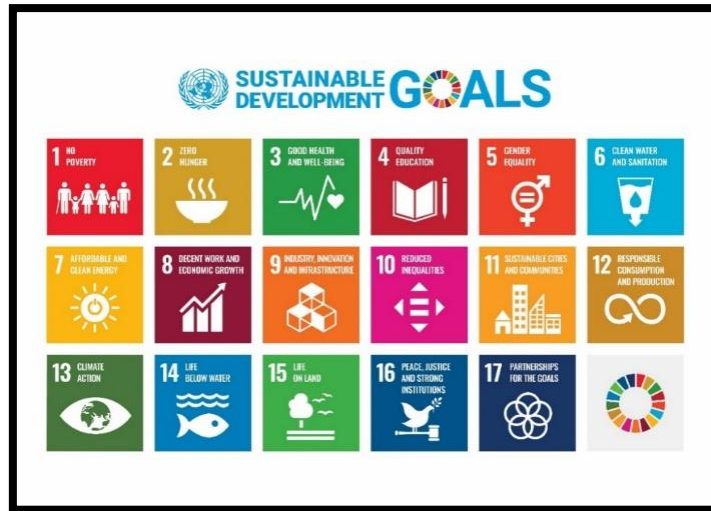
21. Electronic commerce, insolvency law, international sale of goods, public procurement, ISDS reform and alternative dispute resolution were in the focus of the third edition. Considering UNCITRAL's work in those areas and the objective of the UNCITRAL Days initiative to raise awareness of international commercial law among the next generation, the events during the third edition supported UNCITRAL's contribution towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 1, 2, 4-12, 16 and 17.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024*, UN DESA – UNCTAD, United Nations publication Sales No. E.24.II.C.1.

<sup>4</sup> <https://uncitral.un.org/sites/uncitral.un.org/files/media-documents/uncitral/en/digitaleconomytaxonomy.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on how UNCITRAL supports SDGs, see <https://uncitral.un.org/en/about/sdg>.



## Conclusions and way forward

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

23. It is the hope of the UNCITRAL secretariat that the next edition of the UNCITRAL Days in Africa, with its planned focus on the end-to-end trade digitalization and upcoming international convention on negotiable cargo documents,<sup>6</sup> will be equally well received and further disseminated across the continent.

24. For institutions interested in co-organizing an UNCITRAL Days' activity, please contact the UNCITRAL secretariat at [uncitral@un.org](mailto:uncitral@un.org), to explore collaboration opportunities.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see the fact sheet prepared by UNCITRAL secretariat on the project (A/CN.9/WG.VI/WP.113) at [https://uncitral.un.org/en/working\\_groups/6/negotiablecargodocuments](https://uncitral.un.org/en/working_groups/6/negotiablecargodocuments).

## Annex: Summary of Events

### Agostinho Neto University (Angola)

(Luanda, 13 February 2025)

The webinar organized by Agostinho Neto University on 13 February 2025 was the first UNCITRAL Days in Africa event to be conducted in Portuguese language.

The event featured presentations about UNCITRAL and UNCITRAL texts on arbitration and mediation, and uptake of those texts in Portuguese-speaking jurisdictions, including Brazil and Macau (China). The virtual event was attended by 45 participants.



## Botswana University (Botswana)

(Gaborone, 6 November 2024)

The in-person event organized in Gaborone by Botswana University was well-attended (30 participants, mostly women), including by government representatives and commercial law reforms experts. Presentations covered different areas relevant to UNCITRAL, including arbitration, ISDS reform, public procurement, international sale of goods and insolvency. The organizers expressed interest in organizing another conference in 2025, with a focus on public procurement or secured transactions.

According to the organizers: *“The participants included students, academic staff, public service employees and private practitioners. It was indeed an insightful, enlightening and inspiring conference. All participants agreed that it was an interesting discussion for Botswana.”*



## Dschang University (Cameroon)

(Dschang, 6 December 2024)

Dschang University joined the UNCITRAL Days in Africa for the third time. The conference held on 6 December featured a presentation of UNCITRAL texts on electronic commerce followed by academic contributions on the importance of the work of UNCITRAL for the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement and the influence of the UNCITRAL insolvency texts on the texts of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA). More than 70 participants attended the conference in person, and many more were able to follow it online.

According to the organizers : « *L'événement a réuni des praticiens du droit, des étudiants et des opérateurs économiques. C'était une expérience très enrichissante pour les parties prenantes.* » (The event brought together legal practitioners, students and economic operators. It was a highly enriching experience for all concerned.)



Université de Dschang  
Unité de recherche en Droit,  
Institutions et Intégration  
communautaire  
(URDIIC)



## Comoros University (Comoros)

(Moroni, 25-26 November 2024)

The conference was organized by the Law Faculty of the University of Comoros and co-organized by the Comoros Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Craftwork and Comor'Lab, with the support of the Bar Association of Moroni. More than 80 participants attended the two-day event. Discussions covered arbitration, international sale of goods and electronic commerce. Comoros is a member State of OHADA, a longtime partner of UNCITRAL, and is looking at harnessing opportunities offered by the AfCFTA Agreement and its Digital Trade Protocol. The conference was covered by the local media.

Desk-based technical assistance activities on UNCITRAL texts on e-commerce and the drafting of the e-transactions law of Comoros followed the conference.

According to the organizers: « *L'organisation de trois sessions successives dans le cadre des journées de la CNUDCI aux Comores a permis aux membres de notre laboratoire de développer des compétences et la connaissance de cette organisation et d'acquérir de l'expérience sur les sujets en relation avec la CNUDCI. De plus en plus de publications et de travaux de recherche dans notre université sont orientés dans ce domaine.* » (The organization of three successive sessions in the context of the UNCITRAL Days in Comoros has enabled members of our laboratory to acquire competences on and knowledge of UNCITRAL and to gain experience in UNCITRAL-related subjects. More and more of our university's publications and research work are in the areas of work of UNCITRAL.)



== SOCIÉTÉ == Al-watwan du jeudi 28 novembre 2024 == 5 ==

## JOURNÉES DE LA CNUDCI

# Les Comores s'ouvrent au droit commercial international

Par Mhoudini Yahaya

**L**es 25 et 26 novembre, l'Institut de formation et de recherche en éducation (Ifere) a accueilli des journées de sensibilisation sur les instruments de la Commission des Nations unies pour le droit commercial international (Cnudci). Cet événement, organisé par l'Université des Comores, la Chambre de commerce, d'industrie et d'artisanat (Ccia) et Comor'lab, avec le soutien du bureau de Moroni, s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'intégration des Comores au système commercial multilatéral.

### Renforcer les capacités des acteurs économiques et juridiques

Les participants, issus de divers horizons comme la justice, le commerce et l'administration publique, se sont familiarisés au cours de ces deux jours d'atelier avec les textes phares de la Cnudci, notamment la Convention des Nations unies sur la vente internationale de marchandises et la Loi type sur l'arbitrage commercial international. À travers des présentations et des discussions, les échanges ont porté sur l'application concrète de ces outils juridiques et leur rôle dans la résolution

des défis liés au commerce international. Cet événement a eu pour ambition de renforcer les capacités des acteurs économiques et juridiques comoriens, de promouvoir une meilleure compréhension des outils juridiques modernes et de mettre en lumière les enjeux liés au commerce électronique. Il s'agissait également d'encourager l'adoption de ces textes dans les contrats commerciaux et les procédures de règlement des différends, tout en facilitant le partage d'expériences entre professionnels. Soutenu par le se-

crétariat de la Cnudci, l'événement a bénéficié de l'expertise de Dr Luca Castellani, juriste basé à Vienne. Spécialiste de la vente internationale et du commerce électronique, il a souligné l'importance pour les Comores de disposer d'un cadre juridique adapté à leurs besoins. Selon Hamidou Mhoma, directeur régional de la Ccia-Ngazidja, le commerce électronique, qui prend de plus en plus d'importance dans le pays, nécessite l'élaboration d'une loi spécifique. L'organisation de ces journées

reflète la volonté des Comores de tirer pleinement parti de leur adhésion à l'Organisation mondiale du commerce (Omc) et de leur appartenance à des zones d'intégration régionale et continentale comme la Zilecaf. Dr Castellani a indiqué que l'alignement sur un cadre juridique moderne et harmonisé est indispensable pour maximiser les opportunités offertes par cette adhésion. Les Comores pourraient notamment s'inspirer des avancées réalisées à Madagascar et bénéficier d'un accompagnement dans cette transition.



Cette session est en droite ligne avec la volonté du pays à mieux s'intégrer dans le commerce multilatéral.

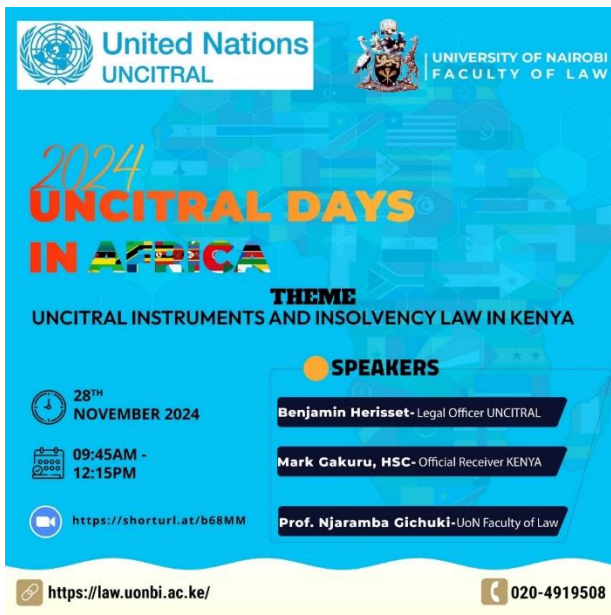


## Nairobi University (Kenya)

(Nairobi, 28 November 2024)

The webinar organized by the Faculty of Law of the University of Nairobi on 28 November focused on the use of UNCITRAL insolvency instruments in Kenya. Presentations by academics and representatives of the judiciary assessed the implementation of the UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency in Kenya and related challenges, such as regarding the status of foreign representatives upon recognition of foreign proceedings in Kenya. Presentation of more recent UNCITRAL insolvency model laws provided an opportunity to consider the need for an update of the insolvency legislation in Kenya.

During the webinar, the UNCITRAL secretariat presented the newly released online course on UNCITRAL insolvency texts (<https://uncitral.un.org/en/onlinecourses>) to students and participants. 40 participants attended the webinar.



The poster is for the 2024 UNCITRAL Days in Africa webinar. It features the United Nations UNCITRAL logo at the top left and the University of Nairobi Faculty of Law logo at the top right. The main title is '2024 UNCITRAL DAYS IN AFRICA' in large, colorful letters. Below it, the theme is 'UNCITRAL INSTRUMENTS AND INSOLVENCY LAW IN KENYA'. The date is '28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024' and the time is '09:45AM - 12:15PM'. A short URL 'https://shorturl.at/b68MM' is provided. The speakers listed are Benjamin Herisset (Legal Officer UNCITRAL), Mark Gakuru, HSC (Official Receiver KENYA), and Prof. Njaramba Gichuki (UoN Faculty of Law). At the bottom, there is a website link 'https://law.uonbi.ac.ke/' and a phone number '020-4919508'.

### Introduction to UNCITRAL Insolvency Texts



This online course is designed for those wishing to learn more about the UNCITRAL insolvency law framework. It provides general knowledge about five parts of the UNCITRAL Legislative Guide on Insolvency Law, and three UNCITRAL insolvency model laws (MLCBI, MLIJ and MLEGI) and their explanatory texts.

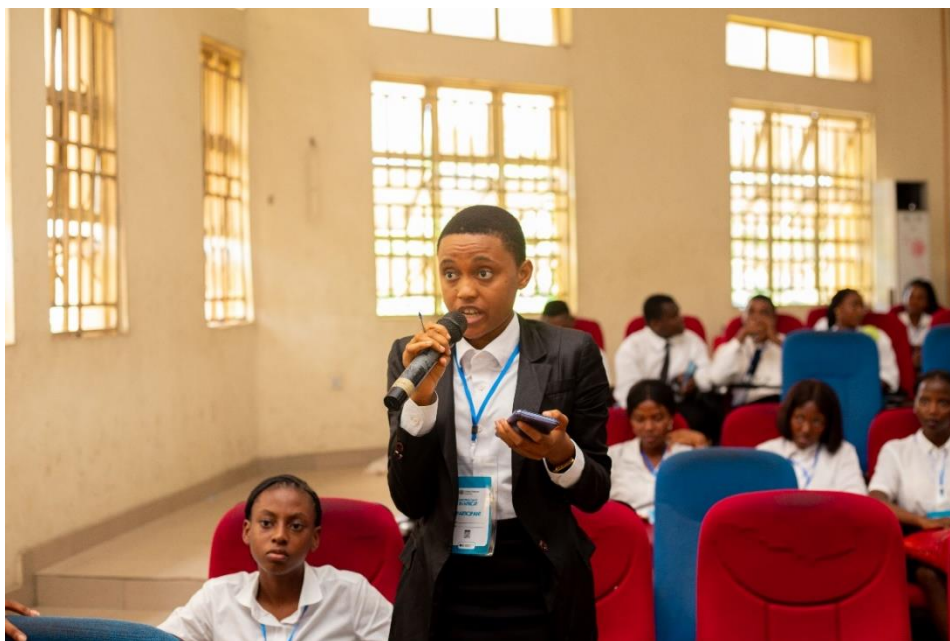
## Uyo University (Nigeria)

(Uyo, 18 November 2024)

The first UNCITRAL Days in Africa conference organized by Uyo University in Nigeria gathered more than 200 in-person participants, with many more participants attending online. The conference featured a general presentation about UNCITRAL and internship opportunities in the UNCITRAL secretariat for law students. A subsequent presentation from an academic representative (a former student of the Uyo University) discussed the indirect application of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (Vienna, 1980) (CISG) in transactions involving parties in Nigeria and the opportunities that ratification of the CISG could offer to businesses in Nigeria. The Conference ended with a presentation of UNCITRAL texts on alternative dispute resolution. It was noted that Nigeria is a State party to the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (New York, 2018) (the "Singapore Convention on Mediation").

According to the organizers: *“The event in general was highly educative, many students from the Faculty of Law of the University of Uyo were enlightened on the objectives and prospectives of UNCITRAL, and we were able to interact with the international Facilitators and gain valuable insights on internship opportunities, and general knowledge about international trade law.”*





## Njala University (Sierra Leone)

(Freetown, 14-15 November 2024)

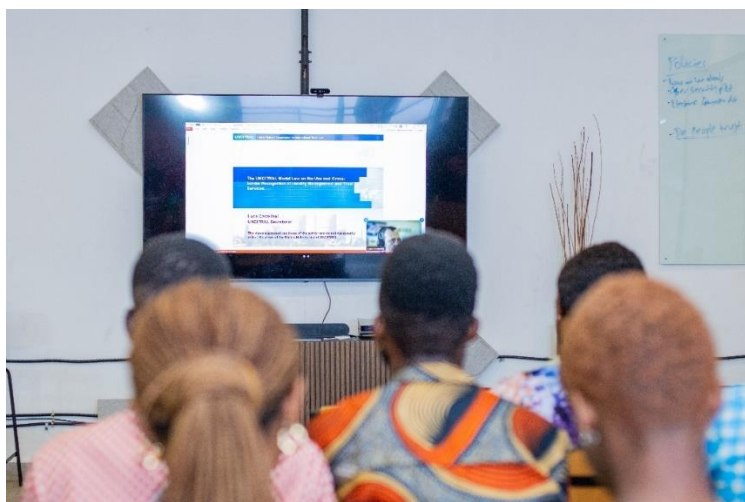
The third UNCITRAL Days in Africa event organized by the Law Faculty of Njala University, dedicated to the work of UNCITRAL on digital economy, was conducted in a workshop format involving a combination of panel discussions (under the theme ‘Tech meets law’ conversations) and breakout sessions with problem-solving activities for participating students. The event was attended by law students and legal professionals, as well as representatives of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies and Regulators, and the private sector players from the tech space.

UNCITRAL secretariat representatives presented the recent UNCITRAL model laws in the area of electronic commerce (Model Law on Automated Contracting (2024) and Model Law on the Use and Cross-border Recognition of Identity Management and Trust Services (2022)).

The event was coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone and the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations. Subsequent discussions were held on possible treaty actions by Sierra Leone on the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts, 2005, CISG, and the United Nations Convention on the International Effects of Judicial Sales of Ships (New York, 2022) (“Beijing Convention on the Judicial Sale of Ships”).

From a participant: *“From my perspective, the event offered a unique opportunity for students and professionals to engage with legal and industry experts on how the digital economy can drive business innovation in Sierra Leone. For students, it was especially beneficial, as it provided practical insights, a platform to connect with professionals, and inspiration to explore possible roles in shaping the digital future of the country.”*





## Venda University (South Africa)

(Venda, 21 February 2025)

The first UNCITRAL Days in Africa event organized by Venda University consisted of a lecture about UNCITRAL to a group of 85 students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the LLB degree program of the University of Venda, Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, in the School of Law.

The lecture provided information about the mandate of UNCITRAL and its work methods, together with an overview of some UNCITRAL texts on selected topics (dispute resolution, insolvency) and their implementation in South Africa.

The ensuing questions and answers' session allowed students to learn more about internship opportunities in the UNCITRAL secretariat and online courses on UNCITRAL and UNCITRAL texts.

