

Public procurement and infrastructure development UNCITRAL Legal Guide on Drawing Up International Contracts for the Construction of Industrial Works (1988) • UNCITRAL Model Law on Procurement of Goods, Construction and Services (1994) • UNCITRAL Legislative Guide on Privately Financed Infrastructure Projects (2001) and Model Provisions (2003)

International payments UNCITRAL Model Law on International Credit Transfers (1992) • United Nations Convention on Independent Guarantees and Stand-by Letters of Credit (1995) • United Nations Convention on the Assignment of Receivables in International Trade (2001)

Electronic commerce UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Commerce (1996) • UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Signatures (2001)

❖ Today, a Russian reader can purchase a book printed in the US from a German web site with a few clicks of the mouse. However, the expansion of E-commerce, both for business and for private use, creates a number of legal challenges. Which “click” will validly conclude the contract? Under what circumstances will an electronic signature have the same value as a hand-written one? The UNCITRAL Model Laws on Electronic Commerce and Electronic Signatures provide a uniform framework to address these issues.

Insolvency UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency (1997) • Legislative Guide on Insolvency Law (2004)

PUBLICATIONS The Secretariat produces a number of publications on the work of UNCITRAL, including a Yearbook of the papers and meeting reports produced each year; booklets and CD ROMs reproducing texts of the Conventions, Model Laws and legal guides; explanatory notes on the various UNCITRAL texts; and a list indicating the current status of adoption and implementation of conventions and model laws.



❖ The UNCITRAL Law Library collection focuses mainly on international trade law and in particular, on UNCITRAL's area of work. It has more than 8,000 volumes and 100 periodicals, as well as electronic resources. Materials date back to the establishment of the library in August 1979. The catalogue of the library is accessible on the Internet via OPAC (On-line Public Access Catalogue). The UNCITRAL Law Library is a reference library only: loans are therefore not possible. It is open from 9:00 hours to 17:00 hours, and accessible only by appointment. Please contact the library by emailing uncitral@uncitral.org, at least three days before the planned visit, specifying the subject area of research and your contact address.

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FACTS ABOUT

UNCITRAL

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION
ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW

*A legal body with universal
membership specializing in
law reform worldwide*



It is widely accepted that trade creates wealth and is essential to the economic health of the world. But who works out the rules for international trade and decides how payments should be made and disputes are to be settled?

When world trade began to expand dramatically in the 1960s, national governments began to realize the need for a global set of standards and rules to harmonize and modernize the assortment of national and regional regulations, which until then largely governed international trade. They turned to the United Nations, which in 1966 recognized the need for it to play a more active role in removing legal obstacles to the flow of international trade and established the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). UNCITRAL has since become the core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law.

Much of the complex network of international legal rules and agreements that affects today's commercial arrangements has been reached through long and detailed consultations and negotiations organized by UNCITRAL. Its aim is to remove or reduce legal obstacles to the flow of international trade and progressively modernize and harmonize trade laws. It also seeks to coordinate the work of organizations active in this type of work and promote wider acceptance and use of the rules and legal texts it develops.

MEMBERSHIP The Commission comprises 60 member States elected by the United Nations General Assembly for a term of six years. Membership is structured to ensure representation of the world's various geographic regions and its principal economic and legal systems.

WORK METHODS Texts designed to simplify trade transactions and reduce associated costs are developed by working groups comprising all member States of UNCITRAL, which meet once or twice per year. Non-member States and interested international and regional organizations are also invited and can actively contribute to the work since decisions are taken by consensus, not by vote. Draft texts completed by these working groups are submitted to UNCITRAL for finalization and adoption at its annual session.

SECRETARIAT The International Trade Law Division of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs provides substantive secretariat services to UNCITRAL, such as conducting research and preparing studies and drafts.

TRADE LAW TEXTS UNCITRAL develops different types of texts to modernize and harmonize the law of international trade. These texts are generally legislative in nature, such as conventions, model laws and legislative guides, or non-legislative texts such as contractual rules that can be incorporated into commercial contracts and legal guides.

Convention: an agreement among States establishing obligations binding upon those States that ratify or accede to it.

Model law: a set of model legislative provisions that States can adopt by enacting it into national law.

Legislative guide: a text that provides guidance for the development of laws, discussing relevant policy issues and choices and recommending appropriate legislative solutions.

Contractual rules: standard clauses or rules designed to be included in commercial contracts.

Legal guide: a text that provides guidance for the drafting of contracts, discussing relevant issues and recommending solutions appropriate to particular circumstances.

TECHNICAL LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANCE

One of UNCITRAL's priorities is providing technical legislative assistance for modernization of trade laws and commercial practices. In addition to promoting understanding of international trade law texts and the benefits they can bring to the expansion of international trade, UNCITRAL assists States to develop the laws required to implement these legislative texts and commercial associations to promote the use of non-legislative rules.

CLOUT The Case Law on UNCITRAL Texts system is a collection of court decisions and arbitral awards interpreting UNCITRAL texts. Currently, CLOUT includes case abstracts in the six United Nations languages on the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG) (Vienna, 1980) and the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration (1985). Other texts will be added as case law becomes available.

ACHIEVEMENTS Over the last 24 years, UNCITRAL has completed major international texts on the sale of goods, transport, dispute resolution, procurement and infrastructure development, international payments, electronic commerce and insolvency. International arbitration, transport law, electronic commerce, insolvency law, security interests and public procurement are the focus of current work.

Sale of goods United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (Vienna, 1980) • UNCITRAL Legal Guide on International Countertrade Transactions (1992)

Transport of goods United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea (Hamburg, 1978)

More than 90 per cent of the world trade is carried by ship. Many of the exotic goods and commodities surrounding us reach us in this way. Many of them actually change hands several times during their voyage at sea. What happens in the case of loss of cargo? What if it is difficult or impossible to ascertain the moment when the loss occurred? UNCITRAL's work in the field of maritime law provides States with a common legal framework, establishing clear rules that contribute to reducing transport costs for the benefit of us, the final consumers.

Dispute resolution UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules (1976) • UNCITRAL Conciliation Rules (1980) • Recommendations to assist arbitral tribunals and other interested bodies with regard to arbitrations under the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules (1982) • UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration (1985) UNCITRAL Notes on Organizing Arbitral Proceedings (1996) • UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Conciliation (2002)