



1966–2026

UNCITRAL
LAW | TRADE | INNOVATION

60



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE

ACCRA CONVENTION

AND UNCITRAL60 SYMPOSIUM

United Nations Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents



THEME: TRADE FACILITATION FOR A DIGITAL AGE

ADVANCING TRADE, TRANSPORT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

**New Auditorium, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accra |
26th October 2026**

Organized in collaboration with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
(UNCITRAL)

1. BACKGROUND

In 2026, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) celebrates its 60th anniversary, marking six decades of contribution to the harmonization, modernization and unification of international trade law. This milestone coincides with the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on Negotiable Cargo Documents, known as the “Accra Convention”, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 15th December 2025.

The Convention establishes a uniform legal framework governing the issuance and use of negotiable cargo documents representing goods in transit, regardless of transport mode, in both paper and electronic form. For the first time, the benefits long confined to the maritime bill of lading are extended to carriage by road, rail and air, and to multimodal carriage, through a single document capable of covering the entire journey from origin to final destination. The Convention will enter into force following the deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

The Convention takes its name from Accra, the city in which it opens for signature. It thereby joins the instruments of international trade law associated with The Hague, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Vienna, New York and Singapore, and gives an African city a lasting place in the vocabulary of international trade law.

2. THE TRADE FACILITATION DIMENSION

The Accra Convention is, in substance, a trade facilitation instrument. Its purpose is not to regulate trade but to remove the legal frictions that make trade slow, costly and inaccessible. The event should be framed accordingly, and that framing should be visible in the theme, in the sessions and in the public messaging.

WHAT THE CONVENTION FACILITATES

- **Documentary simplification.** A single negotiable cargo document may cover an entire multimodal journey, allowing the shipper to work with one document throughout the transport chain, thereby simplifying trade processes and reducing transactional costs.
- **Access to trade finance.** By giving goods in transit the legal character of collateral irrespective of the mode of transport, the Convention opens to road, rail and air cargo a financing technique hitherto available only to sea freight. This speaks directly to the trade finance gap that constrains African importers and exporters, and which disproportionately affects micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and women-owned businesses.
- **Sale of goods in transit.** Goods may be resold while in transit, irrespective of the mode of transport, releasing value earlier in the chain and allowing exporters to be paid before delivery. In this context, the Convention also enhances flexibility and resilience in trade operations by allowing transport modes to be switched more easily in the event of disruptions.

- **Digitalization and paperless trade.** The Convention accords electronic negotiable cargo documents the same legal effect as paper versions, supporting the transition to paperless trade and consistent with the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records.
- **Customs and border efficiency.** Simplified and harmonized documentation supports faster clearance, fewer discrepancies and lower demurrage and detention exposure. As negotiable and tradable documents, negotiable cargo documents contain highly reliable data on goods in transit, which can facilitate more efficient risk assessment and processing by customs authorities.

3. OBJECTIVES

The event aims to:

- Open the Accra Convention for signature and secure the widest possible number of signatures on the day.
- Position the Convention publicly as a trade facilitation instrument, and situate it within the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, the AfCFTA and the wider international and regional trade facilitation agenda.
- Celebrate the 60th anniversary of UNCITRAL and its contribution to the law of the international carriage of goods and digitalization.
- Demonstrate the benefits of negotiable cargo documents to shippers, transport operators, freight forwarders, financial institutions and digital service providers, with particular attention to MSMEs and to women in trade.
- Advance the transition from paper-based to electronic negotiable cargo documents.

4. TARGET AUDIENCE

- Heads of State and Government, Ministers and Heads of Delegation of signatory and prospective signatory States.
- Diplomatic missions and international organizations based in Accra.
- Government officials responsible for trade, transport, customs, justice and digitalization.
- Representatives of international, continental and regional organizations, including the African Union Commission, the AfCFTA Secretariat, ECOWAS, UNECA and the regional commissions.
- Industry representatives, including shippers, transport operators, freight forwarders, logistics and digital service providers, banks and trade financiers.
- Legal practitioners, academics, students and development partners.

5. THE UNCITRAL 60TH SYMPOSIUM

The signing ceremony coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of UNCITRAL by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966. A dedicated UNCITRAL60 symposium will be held on the afternoon of the signature, both to mark the anniversary and to explore the practical operation of the Convention from industry, regional and academic perspectives.

The symposium is a distinct component of the programme, with its own opening and closing, and should be branded and communicated as such. It is proposed that it carry the following commemorative elements in addition to the four substantive sessions:

- **UNCITRAL60 commemorative exhibition:** A display in the margins of the venue tracing six decades of UNCITRAL instruments, from the New York Convention framework and the Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration, through the CISG, the Hamburg Rules, the Rotterdam Rules and the Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records, to the Accra Convention. Curated by the UNCITRAL Secretariat.
- **Anniversary video message:** A short commemorative message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations or the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, screened at the opening of the event.
- **Recognition of the African contribution to UNCITRAL:** A brief tribute to the African delegates, jurists and institutions that have contributed to the work of the Commission over six decades and to the harmonization of international trade law more broadly.
- **Anniversary toast:** A formal UNCITRAL60 toast and cutting of an anniversary cake at the cocktail reception on the eve of the ceremony, proposed by the host and welcomed by the Secretary of UNCITRAL.
- **Student and young practitioner engagement:** Reserved seating at the symposium for students of law, maritime and logistics programmes and for young practitioners, with a short networking segment during the refreshment break.

PROGRAMME

MONDAY, 26TH OCTOBER 2026 |

SIGNING CEREMONY

- NEW AUDITORIUM, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

08:00

- 09:10

ARRIVAL OF THE GUESTS AND REGISTRATION

Submission of original full powers to the Officer of the United Nations Treaty Section

09:10

- 09:15

WELCOME ADDRESS

Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa (MP), Minister for Foreign Affairs

09:15

- 09:20

STATEMENT

Hon. Joseph Bukari Nikpe (MP), Minister for Transport

09:20

- 09:25

STATEMENT

H.E. Wamkela Mene, Secretary-General, AfCFTA Secretariat

09:25

- 09:30

STATEMENT

Ms. Anna Joubin-Bret, Secretary of UNCITRAL

09:30

- 09:35

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Hon. Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare (MP), Minister for Trade, Agribusiness and Industry

Theme: Trade facilitation, the AfCFTA and the promise of a digital trading system and Ghana's commitment to the Accra Convention and to trade facilitation.

09:35

- 09:55

CULTURAL INTERLUDE

09:55

- 10:55

SIGNING OF THE ACCRA CONVENTION

States invited to sign in alphabetical protocol order (English).

The host State to sign first.

Officer of the United Nations Treaty Section in attendance.

10:55

- 11:15

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH

Formal group photograph of all signatory States

11:15

- 12:15

STATEMENTS BY HEADS OF DELEGATION

Statements by signatory States and other interested delegations, of up to 3 minutes each.

12:15

- 14:00

LUNCHEON / PRESS BRIEFING

Government of Ghana, UNCITRAL and interested Heads of Delegation – Joint communiqué issued.

UNCITRAL 60TH SYMPOSIUM | MONDAY, 26TH OCTOBER 2026, AFTERNOON |

SIX DECADES OF HARMONIZING INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW

14:00

- 14:05

UNCITRAL 60TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO MESSAGE

Commemorative message from the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs.
UNCITRAL 60th commemorative exhibition open in the margins throughout the afternoon.

14:05

- 14:20

OPENING REMARKS

- ◆ **Hon. Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare (MP)**, Minister for Trade, Agribusiness and Industry
- ◆ **Ms. Anna Joubin-Bret**, Secretary of UNCITRAL

Brief recognition of the African delegates, jurists and institutions that have contributed to the work of the Commission over six decades.

SESSION I:

14:20 – 15:20

UNLOCKING DIGITAL TRADE AND TRADE FINANCE THROUGH NEGOTIABLE CARGO DOCUMENTS, INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES

How negotiable cargo documents unlock digital trade and close the trade finance gap, from the perspectives of shippers, freight forwarders, banks and digital service providers. Particular attention to MSMEs, to women traders and to the practical steps to adoption.

MODERATOR:

- ◆ **Mr. Fred Asiedu-Dartey**, Head of Freight and Logistics Department, Ghana Shippers' Authority

SPEAKERS:

- ◆ **Ms. Andrea Tang**, Deputy Director-General (Legal Services), International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA)
- ◆ **Mr. James Hookham**, Director, Global Shippers' Forum
- ◆ **Ms. Pamela Mar**, Managing Director, International Chamber of Commerce Digital Standards Initiative
- ◆ **Mr. Chidi Ileka**, Senior Advisor to AfCFTA / Afreximbank
- ◆ **Mr. Michael B.Y. Apalbilah**, Associate, AB & David Africa

15:20

- 15:45

REFRESHMENT BREAK

Ghanaian light refreshments and cultural display.
UNCITRAL60 networking segment for students and young practitioners at the commemorative exhibition.

SESSION II:

15:45 – 16:45

TRADE FACILITATION AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY, CORRIDORS, THE AfCFTA AND NEGOTIABLE CARGO DOCUMENTS

The Convention as an instrument of trade facilitation. Transport corridors and transit trade; the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and the work of National Trade Facilitation Committees; regional integration arrangements, including the AfCFTA and its Protocol on Digital Trade; single windows, customs modernization and border efficiency; and the position of landlocked and transit countries.

MODERATOR:

- ◆ **Ing. Kwamina Sagu Ekremet**, Ag. Director, Ghana & Anglophone West Africa, TradeMark Africa

SPEAKERS:

- ◆ **Mr. Jafar Guluzade**, Technical Attaché, Facilitation Policy Unit, World Customs Organization
- ◆ **Ms. Demitta Chinwude Gyang**, Director, Customs Cooperation, Trade Facilitation and Transit, Senior Advisor to the Secretary-General, AfCFTA Secretariat
- ◆ **Mr. Melaku Desta**, Acting Director, Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD), UNECA
- ◆ **Mr. Kolawole Sofola**, Director of Trade, ECOWAS Commission
- ◆ **Mr. Juma Ahmed**, Assistant Director, Ports and Shipping Services, Kenya Maritime Authority

SESSION III:

16:45 – 17:45

UNCITRAL AT 60, SIX DECADES OF HARMONIZING INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW

Reflection on the achievements of UNCITRAL and its continuing role, with a focus on the international carriage of goods, digitalization as well as dispute settlement.

MODERATOR:

- ◆ **H.E. Matilda Aku Alomatu Osei-Agyeman**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations (Vienna)

SPEAKERS:

- ◆ **H.E. Michael Imran Kanu**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations (New York)
- ◆ **H.E. Diarra Dimé-Labille**, Ambassador of France to Ghana
- ◆ **Mr. Gaston Kenfack**, Director, Ministry of Justice, Cameroon
- ◆ **Dr. Kofi Mbiah**, Former Chief Executive of the Ghana Shippers' Authority and delegate to UNCITRAL on the Rotterdam Rules
- ◆ **Mr. Alex Boateng**, Lecturer at the Regional Maritime University / Chief Executive Officer of Africa Ocean Bridge Maritime Operations Group

17:45

– 17:50

CLOSING REMARKS

Hon. Joseph Bukari Nikpe (MP), Minister for Transport

17:50

– 18:00

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH

Formal group photograph of all speakers and of all participants

EVENING FREE Reserved for bilateral engagements and delegation hospitality and meeting rooms to be made available upon request.

TUESDAY, 27TH OCTOBER 2026 |

DISCOVER GHANA TOUR (OPTIONAL)

09:00

– 13:00

TECHNICAL OPTION: THE PORT OF TEMA

For transport ministries, customs administrations and industry delegates. Visit to the Port of Tema and MPS Terminal 3, with briefings on cargo handling, the transit corridors serving the landlocked States, single window clearance and customs digitalization.

Hosted by GPHA, the Ghana Shippers' Authority and the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority.

ORGANIZATION

The event is organized by the host Government in collaboration with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

Following the invitations to States and their diplomatic missions transmitted by Note Verbale, delegations intending to attend the Signing Ceremony and UNCITRAL60 Symposium are requested to register via the link below: <https://eventflow.cosabonita.tech/register/cmqi2ycp60017i7jqyyf6a5bw>.

**SCAN TO REGISTER**

In order to facilitate the necessary arrangements, States wishing to sign the Convention are kindly requested to notify their intention to do so as soon as possible and to provide copies of the required full powers to the Treaty Section, Office of Legal Affairs at United Nations Headquarters in New York (treatysection@un.org; hamdyd@un.org) by 16th October 2026.

Delegates are requested to indicate their choice of programme for 27th October at the time of registration, to allow transport and security arrangements to be confirmed.

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