



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**“E-commerce in the Context of
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”
21 October 2015 10:00 AM
New York**

Welcoming remarks

by

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Ambassador Oh,
Professor Reyes Villamizar, Chairman of UNCITRAL,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking you and others for organizing this seminar, which could not have been timed any better, as the Sixth Committee this week considered the annual report of UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) on Monday.

I would like to also join in applauding Ambassador Hahn for all of the achievements during his chairmanship of UNCITRAL. I do so particularly as the session he chaired resulted in the adoption of the UN Convention on Transparency in Treaty-based Investor-State Arbitration, which opened for signature also in his presence in Mauritius and now has one State party (Mauritius) and fifteen other signatories.

The secretariat functions of UNCITRAL are performed by the International Trade Law Division based in Vienna, a unit of the Office of Legal Affairs. 2016 will mark the 50th anniversary of UNCITRAL, a body with the mandate of reducing and removing obstacles to the flow of international trade by progressively harmonizing and modernizing international trade law. When UNCITRAL was conceived in 1966, States recognised that promoting the establishment of rules fostering international trade was one of the most important factors in economic development. 50 years might have passed but that statement is still valid. Thus I can only reiterate that UNCITRAL has a significant role to play in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in accomplishing a number of its goals.

It is true that while the pivotal role of trade in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development has been widely recognized, there had been lack of emphasis on the legislative framework that supports and facilitates cross-border trade.

This is more so in the field of electronic commerce, where UNCITRAL has been a pioneer in developing legal standards. Its Model Law on Electronic Commerce, adopted some 20 years, is still being enacted by States.

This is because the Model Law, as well as texts that followed in this field, were all prepared based on the principles of functional equivalence, technical neutrality and non-discrimination. Provisions embodying these principles do not regulate but rather facilitate trade using electronic communications. They also allow for future developments in technology without discriminating one technology over another.

The future, to a certain extent, has become reality thanks to widespread penetration of ICT (information and communication technology) in our lives. And nowhere did I have this feeling more than when I recently visited the Republic of Korea, and it is no accident that the Mission of the Republic of Korea is one of our hosts today. As part of my official visit to the Supreme Court, I was taken on a tour of its IT Center in Bundang where I was deeply impressed about the degree to which modern information technology is advanced in the judiciary of the Republic of Korea. In many ways the Supreme Court IT Center shows a court of the future.

We are likely to witness more dramatic developments as we head to 2030. The 2030 Agenda recognizes both the positive aspects as well as challenges of using ICT. I believe it our obligation to ensure that ICT is used to realize the goals of the 2030 Agenda; to truly transform our world for the benefit of the people.

The use of ICT has great potential to promote economic development, especially in least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island States. However, not all States have been equally successful in implementing ICT and experience shows that the effective use of ICT is the result of solid policy choices, a robust technical infrastructure and a sound legal framework both with respect to regulation and to facilitation. I believe this seminar makes a worthy contribution by highlighting the importance of ICT and the underlying legislative framework.

If one was invited to a seminar organized in the context of the UN some ten years ago, you would not expect to see panels composed of representatives from Microsoft, Verizon, Walt Disney, Cisco, the Internet Society, UNCITRAL, IDLO (International Development Law Organization), UN Global Compact, UNCTAD and highly-recognized law firms all together in half a day.

But this has become the trend and I believe it properly reflects the reality: that considering and implementing an integrated, universal and transformative sustainable development agenda depends on the collaboration of many stakeholders. It also depends on partnerships between the public and private sectors. This is another reason why I believe that this seminar is very timely.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful event and I look forward to interesting discussions.

Thank you.