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**Item No. 10 on the agenda: Implementation status and promotion strategy
for UNIDROIT Instruments**

**(d) UNIDROIT-UNCITRAL Model Law on Warehouse Receipts and Guide to
Enactment**

(prepared by the Secretariat)

<i>Summary</i>	<i>Update on the promotion and implementation strategy and activities for the UNIDROIT-UNCITRAL Model Law on Warehouse Receipts</i>
<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>The Governing Council is invited to take note of the promotion and implementation update</i>
<i>Mandate</i>	<i>Work Programmes 2020-2022 and 2023-2025</i>
<i>Priority level</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Related documents</i>	<i>UNIDROIT 2024 – C.D. (103) 9.2</i> ; <i>UNIDROIT 2024 – C.D. (103) 30</i> ; <i>UNIDROIT 2025 – C.D. (105) 22</i> ; <i>UNIDROIT 2025 – C.D. (105) 32</i>

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The joint UNIDROIT-UNCITRAL project to develop a Model Law on Warehouse Receipts (MLWR) was included in the 2020-2022 Work Programme by the General Assembly at its 79th session in December 2020 ([UNIDROIT A.G. \(79\) 10](#)) as a high-priority item. The UNCITRAL Commission approved the inclusion of the project at its 53rd session in September 2020 ([UN Doc. A/75/17](#)).

2. The MLWR guides States in establishing a modern legal framework for negotiable warehouse receipts, both electronic and paper-based, supporting efficient warehouse receipt markets and agricultural finance. It provides clear rules on the private law aspects of warehouse receipt systems and is accompanied by a Guide to Enactment, offering article-by-article commentary and practical guidance for drafting implementing regulations to ensure their effective national application.

3. In close collaboration with the UNCITRAL Secretariat, a UNIDROIT Working Group prepared a comprehensive draft Model Law between December 2020 and April 2023. This was followed by intergovernmental negotiations of the draft at UNCITRAL Working Group I between 2023 and 2024. The MLWR and its Guide to Enactment were formally approved by the UNIDROIT Governing Council at

its 103rd session in May 2024 ([UNIDROIT C.D. \(103\) 30](#)) and by the UNCITRAL Commission at its 57th session in June-July 2024 ([UN Doc. A/79/17](#)).

4. On 4 December 2024, the United Nations General Assembly, at its 47th plenary meeting, adopted a resolution expressing appreciation for the MLWR. The resolution further recommended that *"all States give favourable consideration to the Model Law when revising or adopting legislation relevant to warehouse receipts"* and invited States that have used the Model Law to advise the Commission accordingly ([UNGA Resolution A/RES/79/118](#)).

5. The MLWR was officially launched on 23 May 2025 during a side event to the 105th session of the Governing Council. The event, jointly organised with UNCITRAL, entitled *"UNIDROIT'S Contribution to Private Law and Agricultural Development – Focus on Warehouse Receipts and Contract Farming"*, took place at the seat of UNIDROIT in Rome. Opening remarks were delivered by UNIDROIT Secretary-General Prof. Ignacio Tirado and UNCITRAL Secretary Ms Anna Joubin-Bret. A panel discussion followed, chaired by UNIDROIT Legal Officer Ms Philine Wehling, which highlighted the MLWR's transformative potential in finance, trade, and food security.

II. PROMOTION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

6. Since the launch of the MLWR, UNIDROIT has collaborated closely with the UNCITRAL Secretariat, partner organisations, former members of the MLWR Working Group, and other experts to advance the instrument's promotion and implementation.

7. The Secretariat's strategic objective is to enhance the MLWR's visibility, promote adoption, and establish it as a benchmark for best practices in warehouse receipt legislation. To achieve this, its promotion and implementation strategy is organised around four interrelated pillars, encompassing both priority actions and longer-term objectives:

- (i) **Awareness and Capacity-Building** – Promoting awareness and understanding of the MLWR among governments, industry actors, legal practitioners, and other stakeholders;
- (ii) **Regional Promotion and Outreach** – Targeting regions where warehouse receipt legislation is underdeveloped or reforms are underway, particularly in the context of smallholder- and SME-driven agricultural economies and digitalisation initiatives;
- (iii) **Domestic Legislative Implementation** – Supporting States in adopting and integrating the MLWR into national legislation and regulatory frameworks;
- (iv) **Accessibility and Knowledge Resources** – Facilitating global access to the MLWR through translations, online resources, and practical guidance.

A. Pillar I – Awareness and Capacity-Building

8. The Secretariat leverages capacity-building programmes, conferences, and similar events to raise the visibility of the MLWR and promote its consideration in legal reforms and the development of trade finance systems. Examples of activities since the 105th Governing Council session (20-23 May 2025) are outlined below.

1. Capacity-Building Programmes

9. The MLWR has been integrated into recurring capacity-building programmes. Most notably, the MLWR forms part of the **UNIDROIT International Programme for Law and Development (IPLD)**, launched in 2022 with financial support from the Italian Government.¹ Since the last

¹ Information on the IPLD is available at <https://www.unidroit.org/ipld/>.

session of the Governing Council, the MLWR was presented and discussed in the fourth edition of the IPLD “Africa Plus” (June-July 2025). During the IPLD “Africa Plus” Programme, UNIDROIT Legal Officer Ms Philine Wehling, together with UNCITRAL Legal Officer Mr Luca Castellani, presented the MLWR, highlighting the potential of an enabling legal framework to increase access to finance and markets for smallholder farmers and SMEs, its interconnections with commodity exchanges, features of electronic warehouse receipts, and the practical implications for trade finance in the African context (20 June 2025).

10. In the first edition of the IPLD BEPCAC (Balkans, Eastern Partnership countries, Central Asia and the Caucasus) (September 2025), Ms Philine Wehling and Mr Luca Castellani explored the implementation of the MLWR with the participating legal professionals, addressing the role of negotiable warehouse receipts in secured transactions and the potential of electronic systems to modernise warehouse receipt financing.

11. Another annual programme incorporating the MLWR into its curriculum is the **Master’s in International Business Law at the Sapienza University** of Rome, co-organised with UNIDROIT and coordinated by the Secretary-General since 2023. This programme engages qualified practitioners, many from Latin American jurisdictions. On 10 July 2025, Ms Philine Wehling delivered a lecture on the MLWR, focusing on electronic warehouse receipts, their different models, and the ways in which the MLWR’s provisions can strengthen trade, secure transactions, and enhance access to finance within the broader framework of agricultural finance.

2. Conferences and Workshops

12. At the **APEC Workshop** on “Secured Finance to Facilitate Sustainable Economic Growth and Improve Food Security” held in Tokyo, Japan on 8-10 October 2025, a dedicated panel focused on the MLWR. Speakers included two former members of the UNIDROIT Working Group that had developed the instrument, Mr Bruce Whittaker (Senior Fellow, University of Melbourne) and Prof. Teresa Rodríguez de las Heras Ballell (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid), as well as one of the Working Group’s observers, Ms Elsa Ayala (former President of the Mexican Warehouse Association).

13. The MLWR was also highlighted in a panel on agricultural finance for smallholder farmers at the **World Bank’s Legal Justice and Development Week** 2025. UNIDROIT Deputy Secretary-General Prof. Anna Veneziano participated remotely on 5 November 2025. Moderated by IFAD General Counsel Ms Katie Meighan, the discussion addressed challenges and solutions for bridging the financial gap faced by smallholder farmers.

14. During **Hong Kong Legal Week**, held on 1-5 December 2025, Mr Marek Dubovec, former member of the MLWR Working Group, presented the MLWR on the Panel on “*Digitalization of Trade Finance and Digital Assets*”,² emphasising its technology-neutral framework for electronic warehouse receipts.

B. Pillar II – Regional Promotion and Outreach

15. Regional promotion of the MLWR is a central component of efforts to encourage its legislative adoption. The Secretariat has focused primarily on **Africa** and **Asia**, delivering capacity-building programmes and conference presentations, as noted under Pillar I (see paras. 9, 10, 12, and 14). Many countries in these regions stand to gain substantially from implementing a legal framework inspired by the MLWR, particularly given their smallholder- and SME-driven agricultural economies and ongoing digitalisation initiatives.

² Agenda available at: <https://www.legalweek.hk/en>.

16. In many of these countries, agriculture remains a cornerstone of the economy, contributing significantly to employment, GDP, and export earnings. The sector is characterised by a high proportion of small-scale farmers and agricultural SMEs, as defined by UN classifications, who often face barriers to affordable credit due to limited collateral and high borrowing costs. A lack of dedicated legal frameworks for commodity-collateralised lending further limits small-scale farmers and SMEs in accessing affordable credit and participating in markets. Implementing warehouse receipt legislation based on the MLWR would enable stored agricultural commodities to serve as secure, enforceable collateral, thereby facilitating access to affordable financing.

17. Ongoing digitalisation initiatives and policy discussions on the introduction of enabling legal frameworks for electronic documents, including electronic warehouse receipts, create additional momentum for MLWR adoption in these regions.

C. Pillar III – Domestic Legislative Implementation

18. In line with the purpose of the MLWR, the Secretariat's strategy ultimately aims to encourage its adoption and integration into domestic legislation. Designed as a jurisdiction-neutral instrument, the MLWR serves as a legislative template adaptable to any national context. It provides a technology-neutral framework for electronic warehouse receipts, accommodating public, private, and decentralised systems, which can be formally incorporated into national regulatory structures.

19. Given its recent adoption in 2024 and official launch in 2025, implementation of the MLWR remains at an early stage. Nevertheless, a number of initial developments have already emerged. Notably, governments in the Middle East and Central Asia have sought guidance on potential legal reforms. In this context, UNIDROIT and UNCITRAL have engaged closely with two countries, **Saudi Arabia** and **Uzbekistan**, seeking assessments of their existing legislation in light of the MLWR.

20. On 30 March 2026, UNIDROIT received a delegation from the Shanghai Pudong New Area of China to discuss legal frameworks for bulk commodity trade, with particular emphasis on the MLWR as a key instrument for supporting the development of secure and efficient warehouse receipt systems. The delegation outlined Pudong's economic profile and legislative priorities, expressing strong interest in drawing on UNIDROIT's standards, and both sides agreed to explore future collaboration in the area of warehouse receipt legislation.

D. Pillar IV – Accessibility and Knowledge Resources

21. To facilitate global accessibility and adoption, the Model Law and its Guide to Enactment are available in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.³ The availability of the instrument in multiple official languages supports its dissemination across diverse legal systems and enhances its usability by policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders worldwide.

22. User-oriented tools, including UNIDROIT's video introducing the MLWR,⁴ disseminate knowledge and raise awareness among relevant stakeholders. Further envisaged knowledge-sharing initiatives include case studies and lessons learned from countries that have incorporated the MLWR, reinforcing its practical relevance.

³ All language versions are available at: <https://www.unidroit.org/instruments/wr/uncitral-unidroit-model-law-on-warehouse-receipts-language-versions/>.

⁴ The UNIDROIT video introducing the MLWR is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar5nr9ZSlus>.

III. FUTURE ACTIVITIES (2026–2027)

23. The Secretariat will continue pursuing the four-pillar strategy, emphasising awareness, outreach, and supporting governments requesting legal reform advice, in close collaboration with its partners. Governing Council Members are invited to liaise with the Secretariat regarding promotion and implementation activities of interest to their governments or stakeholders.

24. Moreover, the White Paper being prepared by the **Committee for the Private Law and Agriculture Workstream** as part of UNIDROIT's Centenary in 2026 will assess UNIDROIT's work in Private Law and Agriculture – including the MLWR – and formulate recommendations for future work.⁵ The Secretariat will incorporate relevant recommendations into its strategy. For further information, see document C.D. (107) 27 on Initiatives related to the Centenary.

IV. ACTION TO BE TAKEN

25. *The Governing Council is invited to take note of the update on the Secretariat's strategy of promotion and implementation in relation to the UNIDROIT-UNCITRAL Model Law on Warehouse Receipts.*

⁵ For further information on the work of the Committee for the Private Law and Agriculture Workstream, see <https://www.unidroit.org/centenary/private-law-and-agriculture-workstream/>.