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To all the Members of the AIPPI - UAE National Group

18th Circular/ 2025

**Subject: Global Summit on Digital Trade and Digital Platforms 8 and 9 December 2025
Outcomes and Strategic Significance**

As we close the year, we are delighted to share with you our 18th Circular of 2025, authored by our esteemed colleague and AIPPI member Dr. Hemida Abdelati. This circular offers insights into the Global Summit on Digital Trade and Digital Platforms, which took place in Dubai on 8 and 9 December 2025, a remarkable gathering that highlighted the UAE's leadership in shaping the future of digital commerce and international trade law.

Before diving into the article, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, filled with joy, success and continued collaboration.

The Global Summit on Digital Trade and Digital Platforms, hosted by the UAE Ministry of Economy & Tourism in strategic collaboration with UNCITRAL for two days 8 and 9 December 2025, marked a significant milestone in global efforts to modernise the legal and regulatory foundations of digital commerce. The summit forms part of wider international initiatives aimed at enhancing legal certainty, improving cross-border interoperability and supporting the growth of emerging digital ecosystems.

The event reflects the UAE's continued commitment to shaping forward-looking global digital governance frameworks that promote innovation, economic diversification and international competitiveness. It brought together policymakers, legal experts, digital economy specialists, platform operators and private-sector leaders to address the accelerating global shift toward digitally enabled trade systems. Discussions centred on the development of interoperable international model laws designed to enhance trust, security and efficiency in cross-border digital transactions.

Purpose and Objectives

The summit was convened with the following key objectives:

- Advancing international model laws to strengthen legal certainty in digital trade.
- Supporting greater global harmonisation of digital platform governance.
- Identifying gaps in existing legal frameworks relating to digital identity, smart contracts, e-payments and data flows.
- Strengthening trust mechanisms that underpin secure digital commerce at regional and global levels.
- Promoting sustained multilateral cooperation among governments, regulators and the private sector.

Structure and Participation

The programme comprised plenary sessions, technical working groups, expert panels and ministerial-level dialogues. Participants included:

- Representatives from national governments and regulatory authorities.
- UNCITRAL legal experts and rapporteurs.
- Delegations from international organisations such as the WTO, OECD, UNDP, and WIPO.
- Private-sector leaders from fintech, e-commerce, digital platforms and cybersecurity.
- Academic specialists in international trade law and digital transformation.

This diverse participation enabled a holistic examination of the legal, technological and commercial dimensions of digital trade.

- Key Discussion Areas

1. Digital Trade Legal Infrastructure

Discussions highlighted the need to modernise laws governing digital transactions, including:

- Harmonised definitions for electronic documents, signatures and authentication.
- Legal recognition of digital identity and cross-border interoperability.
- Addressing adoption challenges faced by SMEs and developing economies.

2. Digital Platforms and Market Regulation

Participants examined governance challenges associated with digital platforms, focusing on:

- Transparency and accountability in platform operations.
- Algorithmic bias, competition concerns and market dominance.
- Consumer protection and equitable access for micro and small enterprises.

3. Smart Contracts and Emerging Technologies

Key topics included:

- Legal validity and enforceability of smart contracts.
- Blockchain-based recordkeeping and digital notarisation.
- Risk management for automated and AI-driven processes.
- Effective digital dispute resolution mechanisms.

4. Data Governance and Cross-Border Data Flows

The summit explored approaches to:

- Aligning data protection and privacy frameworks.
- Balancing data sovereignty with global digital trade requirements.
- Ensuring secure data transfers through legal and technical safeguards.
- Developing model provisions for digital trust frameworks.

5. Digital Payments and E-Commerce Infrastructure

Discussions covered:

- Cross-border e-payment interoperability.
- Cybersecurity and fraud prevention.
- Standardisation of digital invoicing and trade documentation.
- Implications for customs, logistics and supply-chain digitalisation.

- Key Outcomes and Agreements

Advancement of UNCITRAL Model Laws

Participants agreed to accelerate work on updated international model laws, including provisions on:

- Digital platform governance.
- Smart contracts and blockchain standards.
- Cross-border recognition of digital identity.
- Secure and authenticated digital trade documentation.

Establishment of Ongoing Working Groups

Specialised working groups were endorsed to focus on:

- Digital identity and trust services.
- Cross-border data governance.
- Platform accountability standards.
- Legal facilitation of e-commerce for SMEs.

Reinforcement of the UAE's Leadership Role

The UAE was recognised for:

- Its proactive digital economy policies.
- Its role as a regional and global convenor of policy dialogue.
- Its ability to integrate international best practices into national frameworks.

Commitment to a Multi-Year Reform Agenda

Stakeholders committed to a structured follow-up programme, including:

- Annual progress reports.
- Legal guidance for national governments.
- Capacity-building toolkits for businesses, particularly SMEs.
- Ongoing consultations on digital trade harmonisation.

Implications for Stakeholders

For Government Entities

- Align forthcoming legislation with UNCITRAL recommendations.
- Update national digital commerce policies.
- Strengthen regulatory sandboxes for fintech and digital platforms.
- Enhance data infrastructure, cybersecurity, and identity verification systems.

For Private-Sector Businesses

- Prepare for new compliance requirements related to platform transparency.
- Invest in digital authentication, blockchain solutions, and secure payment systems.
- Review data governance practices for cross-border compatibility.
- Participate in consultations shaping future model laws.

For SMEs and Startups

- Benefit from simplified digital trade rules and reduced compliance barriers.
- Access greater legal certainty for international market entry.
- Use trusted digital identity tools and digital documentation.
- Engage in training and capacity-building initiatives arising from the summit.

Next Steps and Recommended Actions

All relevant entities are encouraged to:

- Review existing digital trade operations and identify areas requiring regulatory adjustment.
- Nominate representatives to participate in UNCITRAL follow-up working groups.
- Engage with the Ministry of Economy & Tourism in national consultations.
- Prepare internal policy briefs aligned with emerging international model laws.
- Support awareness initiatives to inform businesses of upcoming digital platform obligations.

Conclusion

The Global Summit on Digital Trade and Digital Platforms represents a decisive step in advancing the UAE's vision for a modern, trusted and innovation-driven digital economy. Through close collaboration with UNCITRAL and leading international institutions, the UAE has reinforced its role as a key contributor to shaping global digital trade governance, including the development of legal frameworks that support the protection, management, and enforcement of intellectual property in digital environments.

As international trade continues to evolve toward digitally integrated systems, regulatory readiness and alignment with emerging global standards are essential, not only for digital commerce, but also for safeguarding IP rights across digital platforms, smart contracts, data-driven markets and cross-border transactions.

Government entities, businesses, and SMEs are therefore urged to treat the summit's outcomes as a strategic priority, embedding them into IP strategies, legal reviews, policy planning and digital transformation initiatives. Through coordinated action, the UAE will continue to strengthen its global competitiveness, foster innovation and support sustainable, future-ready economic growth.

Thank you

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