

# MODEL CONTRACTS FOR SMALL FIRMS

## LEGAL GUIDANCE FOR DOING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS



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Model Contracts for Small Firms: Legal Guidance for Doing International Business

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Book containing model forms of the main international commercial contracts that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will need in their trade transactions – provides Model Contracts for key trade activities such as sale of goods, distribution, services, joint ventures, international commercial agencies, long-term supply of goods, alliance or collaboration between parties, and contract manufacture agreement.

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# Foreword

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Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the backbone of many economies, did nearly all their business within national borders until just a few decades ago. Now they are exporting to and importing from all corners of the world. But most small firms do not have access to the legal advice they need at the best of times, and even less so in the current economic climate when they are under pressure to cut costs.

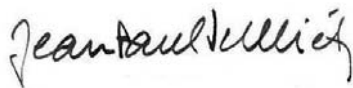
To meet this challenge, the International Trade Centre (ITC), a joint agency of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations, set up a network of top trade lawyers to create a series of Model Contracts that take into account the increasing sophistication of international trade transactions, incorporate internationally recognized standards and best practices, and still try to make things as simple as they can be in a global context.

Leading law firms with trade expertise from 51 countries seconded specialists to work together at no charge to create models that – with minimal modifications – can be used for contracts in any part of the world. These Model Contracts for key trade activities such as sale of goods, distribution, services, joint ventures, etc., are a concrete, practical way to secure international deals involving small firms. They also bridge the many cultural and legal traditions that are reflected in global trade.

Equally important is making sure these Model Contracts reach small businesses in the countries where they are needed most. This is why ITC is working with its global network of national trade support institutions, such as chambers of commerce, which will make the contracts freely available to businesses in several languages through their websites and other means.

An interesting feature of this endeavour is how a much-diversified group of contracts was harmonized substantively by identifying and drafting recurring provisions common to most of them. This trend points to the increasing global convergence of views between experts and business people on how international trade is conducted. This is good news for small firms, because harmonization simplifies the understanding and practice of international trade, and lowers transaction costs.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the drafting team and to all the members of the ITC Pro-bono Committee on International Commercial Model Contracts for SMEs who have so ably and efficiently contributed their time and expertise in making these Model Contracts available to all.



Jean-Paul Vulli  ty  
Chairman, ITC's Pro-Bono  
Committee on Model  
International Contracts for SMEs



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