



MALTA VI

Sixth Malta Conference on the HCCH Children's Conventions as Bridges between Civil / Common Law and Islamic Law

Tuesday 6 – Friday 9 April 2027

CONCEPT NOTE

The *Sixth Malta Conference on HCCH Children's Conventions as Bridges between Civil / Common Law and Islamic Law* (Malta VI) will take place in Malta from Tuesday 6 to Friday 9 April 2027. Malta VI is organised jointly by the Permanent Bureau (PB) of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) and the Government of Malta.

1. BACKGROUND: THE MALTA PROCESS

The Malta Conferences¹ form part of the [Malta Process](#), an HCCH initiative that began in 2004 to promote dialogue and practical cooperation between States whose legal systems are based upon or influenced by Islamic (Shari'a) law and States that are Parties to one or more of the HCCH Children's Conventions.²

Since its inception, the Malta Process has helped improve mutual understanding and foster practical solutions to address cross-border family disputes involving children, including contact rights, child abduction, child support and international family relocation. The Malta Process also aims to encourage broader participation in HCCH Children's Conventions by States whose legal systems are based upon or influenced by Islamic (Shari'a) law.

By promoting cooperation among relevant authorities, judicial communication, mediation, technical assistance and capacity building, the Malta Process has demonstrated that the 1980 Child Abduction, the 1996 Child Protection and the 2007 Child Support Conventions provide effective frameworks for protecting children and families across different legal traditions. Initiatives such as the International Hague Network of Judges (IHNJ)³ and the [Working Party on Mediation](#) serve to further strengthen the operation of the HCCH Children's Conventions.⁴

¹ Previous Malta Conferences were held in 2004, 2006, 2009, 2016 and 2024.

² *Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction* (1980 Child Abduction Convention); *Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children* (1996 Child Protection Convention); *Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance* (2007 Child Support Convention) and its *Protocol on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligations* (2007 Maintenance Obligations Protocol).

³ The IHNJ is currently composed of 162 Judges from 88 States worldwide (incl. judges from Israel, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey).

⁴ Established in 2009, the Working Party on Mediation promotes mediation in cross-border family disputes. It has developed the *Principles for the Establishment of Mediation Structures in the Context of the Malta Process*. The Working Party meets regularly to support continued dialogue and the exchange of good practices.

Guided by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Malta Conferences have promoted the HCCH Children's Conventions as effective tools for protecting children and practical bridges between different legal traditions.

2. PURPOSE AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Malta VI seeks to continue and broaden the dialogue among Central Authorities, competent authorities, judges, policymakers, experts and other key stakeholders. Building on Malta V, Malta VI will place particular emphasis on practical implementation and follow-up, while identifying priorities for the further development of the Malta Process.

Malta VI aims to:

- **Assess the implementation of the Malta V [Conclusions & Recommendations](#) (C&R) and adopt new C&R building on them:** review progress since Malta V, share national experiences and good practices, identify implementation challenges, and promote practical follow-up.
- **Promote child-centred approaches in cross-border family situations across different legal traditions:** explore how the HCCH Children's Conventions support the implementation of the UNCRC in cross-border family situations by promoting the best interests of the child and the child's right to be heard, and by addressing key cross-border family law issues, including parental responsibility, child protection, cross-border contact, the prevention of child abduction, child support recovery, international family relocation, the recognition and enforcement of parental agreements, and the cross-border operation of *kafala*.
- **Enhance cooperation and wider participation in HCCH initiatives:** strengthen judicial and administrative cooperation at domestic, regional and international levels and encourage further designations to the IHNJ and broader participation in the Working Party on Mediation.
- **Promote technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives** to support the effective implementation of the HCCH Children's Conventions, and encourage the use of **mediation** and other appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms both within and beyond the framework of the HCCH Children's Conventions.
- **Identify future priorities for the Malta Process:** encourage broader participation in and effective operation and implementation of the HCCH Children's Conventions, address emerging cross-border family challenges, and strengthen relevant partnerships.

The Malta VI Conclusions & Recommendations are expected to identify concrete follow-up actions for participating States, the PB and other relevant stakeholders.

3. PARTICIPANTS

Invitations will be extended to States that have participated in previous Malta Conferences,⁵ as well as to the European Union, which has also participated, and to other interested States.⁶ Participation will seek to ensure a balanced representation of Contracting and non-Contracting States, while encouraging broader participation from previously underrepresented regions with legal systems based upon or influenced by Islamic (Shari'a) law, including African States.

Participating States will in principle be invited to nominate up to two delegates:

- one senior official or judge with responsibility or particular expertise in the protection of children and families ; and

⁵ Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, European Union, France, Georgia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

⁶ This may include States that were invited to past Conferences but did not attend, incl. Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Iraq, and United Arab Emirates.

- one senior official for consular affairs who deals with cross-border family matters (incl. with foreign States which are not Parties to the 1980 Child Abduction, 1996 Child Protection, and 2007 Child Support Conventions).

In addition, relevant intergovernmental organisations and bodies,⁷ a limited number of non-governmental organisations⁸ and independent experts who specialise in international child protection and family law will also be invited to contribute to the discussions.

A maximum of 120 persons may attend this conference. Official invitations, along with the registration form and information about accommodation, will be issued in due course.

4. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

- **Date:** Tuesday 6 April (afternoon) to Friday 9 April 2027 (lunch time).
- **Venue:** Hyatt Regency Malta, 77, Triq Sqaq Lourdes, St. George's Bay, St. Julian's, STJ 3311, Malta
- **Format:** In-person only.
- **Travel and accommodation:** States and organisations are expected to finance and organise their representatives' travel (including visa arrangements), accommodation and daily subsistence allowance. Subject to the availability of funding, financial support may be provided to selected delegates from eligible ODA States (see "Funding" below). Participants are reminded to allow sufficient time for their visa application process, if necessary.
- **Programme:** The PB, in consultation with the Government of Malta, will coordinate the substantive programme.
- **Working languages:** English and Arabic, with simultaneous interpretation. Subject to available resources, simultaneous interpretation to French (and Spanish) may also be included.

5. FUNDING

The Government of Malta has committed to contribute a very significant part of the human and financial resources required for Malta VI.

In addition, in order to ensure a meaningful dialogue during Malta VI between Contracting States or Parties to HCCH Conventions and non-Contracting States with legal systems based upon or influenced by Islamic (Shari'a) law, the PB is still seeking voluntary contributions to ensure the participation of delegates from eligible ODA (Official Development Assistance) States. With this aim, the PB has applied for funding via a European Union Action Grant.

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⁷ League of Arab States, Asian African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), African Union (AU), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

⁸ Association of International Family Judges (AIFJ), iHOPE, International Social Service (ISS), International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), International Academy of Family Lawyers (IAFL), International Bar Association (IBA), MiKK International Mediation Centre for Family Conflict and Child Abduction (MiKK e.V.), and reunite.