

<b>Title</b>	Regional Offices: Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Africa (ROAF) in 2025
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# Regional Offices: Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Africa (ROAF) in 2025

## I. Introduction and Strategic Objectives

- 1 In March 2025, the Council on General Affairs and Policy (CGAP) of the HCCH approved the establishment of a Regional Office for Africa (ROAF) in Rabat, Morocco. ROAF was formally established on 2 June 2025, with the signature of the Host Seat Agreement between Morocco and the HCCH, and its premises officially opened on 9 July 2025.
- 2 ROAF is one of the three current Regional Offices (ROs) of the Permanent Bureau (PB) of the HCCH.<sup>1</sup> ROs are established to strengthen the HCCH's universality and inclusiveness and to increase the HCCH's visibility, capability, and relevance within a region.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 ROAF's work programme is tailored to contribute to the strategic objectives of the HCCH:
  - a. promoting the universality of the Organisation by increasing awareness of the HCCH, the HCCH instruments and their benefits among States and other stakeholders in the region;
  - b. promoting the inclusiveness of the HCCH by supporting the active involvement of States and other stakeholders in the region in its normative, post-Convention, and governance work;
  - c. assisting States in the region in the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, including through the delivery of efficient, tailored post-Convention services and assistance.
- 4 ROAF is headed by a Representative for Africa, Mr Rachid Ouardifi, who is supported by a team composed of Mr Ayoub Kaddouri, Legal Officer, Ms Samia Es-Sayed, Legal Officer, and Ms Sara Bouqartacha, Communications and Office Coordinator.
- 5 All costs for ROAF, including rental, salaries, and travel, are covered exclusively through the support provided by the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

## II. Work and progress in achieving the strategic objectives

### A. Promoting the universality of the HCCH by increasing awareness of the HCCH, the HCCH instruments and their benefits among States and other stakeholders in the region

- 6 The establishment of ROAF represents an important step in the HCCH's efforts to further the universality of its work. By serving as a platform to disseminate information on the work of the HCCH across the African continent and engage with new stakeholders, ROAF is expected to accelerate the incorporation of new Members and Contracting Parties from the region, currently underrepresented at the HCCH. In the months preceding and following its formal establishment, ROAF began undertaking activities in this important area of its mandate, as outlined in this section.
- 7 In June 2025, following the signature of the Host Seat Agreement between Morocco and the HCCH, a Forum for Ambassadors from African and Arab States was held in Rabat, bringing together more than 50 Ambassadors accredited to Morocco. The Ambassadors were introduced to the work of the

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), please consult "Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) (1 January – 31 December 2025)", Prel. Doc. No 17A for CGAP 2026. For more information on the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), please consult "Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) (1 January – 31 December 2025)", Prel. Doc. No 17B for CGAP 2026. Both are available on the website of the HCCH ([www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net)) under "Governance" => "Council on General Affairs and Policy".

<sup>2</sup> See the HCCH's [Rules for the Establishment of Regional Offices](#) ("Rules"), adopted in 2020.

HCCH and its key Conventions and had the opportunity to discuss how their States could benefit from closer cooperation with the HCCH through ROAF. This first event helped consolidate ROAF's institutional visibility and established a framework for regular dialogue and cooperation with African and Arab diplomatic missions.

- 8 In late 2025, a *note verbale* on the establishment of ROAF was transmitted through diplomatic channels to capitals across the region, accompanied by a comprehensive guide which presented, in a concise and accessible manner, information on the HCCH, its Conventions and instruments, and the newly-established ROAF, including its mission, objectives, and priorities. This initiative facilitated a clearer understanding of the HCCH instruments among States in the region, particularly within ministries of justice, foreign affairs, and institutions involved in international legal cooperation, with the ultimate aim of fostering an informed and sustainable dialogue and promoting their active participation in the HCCH.
- 9 In addition to these general outreach initiatives, ROAF has begun conducting targeted outreach to individual States. This has included direct bilateral engagement, through the Ministry of Justice of Morocco, in the context of joint commissions held between Morocco and those States. These exchanges provided an opportunity to present the establishment of ROAF, its mandate and role, and to underscore the importance and relevance of the work of the HCCH.
- 10 Institutional contacts have also been established with several States in the region to organise working meetings in the context of awareness-raising missions. These working meetings will aim to present in detail the role of the HCCH, its institutional framework, and the various avenues for engagement available to States, including becoming a Member of the Organisation and joining one or more HCCH instruments. During these meetings, ROAF will explain clearly the legal and institutional procedures for:
  - Becoming a Member of the HCCH, including participation in governance bodies and decision-making processes.
  - Becoming a Contracting Party to HCCH Conventions, taking into account their national priorities, domestic legal frameworks, and institutional capacities.
- 11 These working meetings will initially focus on Cabo Verde, Mauritania, and Senegal.
- 12 Regarding Cabo Verde, a meeting was held with the Ministry of Justice in October 2025 to present the HCCH's work and main instruments. On this occasion, the Minister of Justice expressed strong interest in developing a work programme to support the country in the process of acceding to the relevant HCCH instruments.
- 13 Mauritania has responded positively to ROAF's proposal to support the development of a work programme aimed at facilitating its integration into the HCCH. The proposed work programme is structured around three complementary phases:
  - An initial phase introducing HCCH instruments of particular interest to Mauritania;
  - A second phase dedicated to developing tailored practical guidance for the implementation and effective application of the Conventions;
  - A third phase focused on training and capacity-building activities for relevant stakeholders.
- 14 As for Senegal, discussions have already begun with officials from the Ministry of Justice to organise a working meeting in Dakar on the sidelines of the HCCH-PCA conference for francophone States to be held in April 2026.
- 15 In addition to its direct engagement with States, ROAF has initiated outreach to other key stakeholders in the region, including intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. Recognising the key role of notaries in the operation of some of the HCCH Conventions, ROAF

organised a meeting in May 2025 with the presidents of notarial associations, focused on presenting the HCCH's work, its core Conventions and instruments, and the opportunities they offer to notaries and legal practitioners across Africa. This was followed, later in the year, by the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between ROAF and the African Affairs Commission of the International Union of Notaries (UINL). The ceremony was attended by the Presidents of African notarial bodies that are UINL members, as well as by several legal experts, and was followed by a roundtable discussion on the HCCH and some of its instruments. Collectively, these initiatives have established the basis for a promising partnership between the HCCH and notarial associations in Africa. They form part of ROAF's broader efforts to increase awareness of the HCCH Conventions among legal professionals across the African continent and to foster their active participation in the region's further integration within the HCCH network.

16 Alongside its outreach to associations and legal professionals, ROAF is preparing to engage with intergovernmental organisations to raise awareness of the HCCH and its instruments in the region. At the 21<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting of the 80<sup>th</sup> session of the Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, held on 21 October 2025, the Government of Morocco highlighted the establishment of ROAF, noting its potential to foster closer collaboration between UNCITRAL and the HCCH.

**B. Promoting the inclusiveness of the HCCH by supporting the active involvement of States and other stakeholders in the region in its normative, post-Convention and governance work**

17 To promote the inclusiveness of the HCCH, ROAF has begun to devote the necessary efforts to support the active participation of States and other stakeholders from the African region in the normative, post-Convention, and governance work of the Organisation. The success of these activities in increasing the extent and quality of the region's involvement in the HCCH's work will depend, in part, on States having a sufficient understanding of the HCCH and the political support to dedicate resources to these efforts. To lay the groundwork for these conditions to be met, in 2025 ROAF has prioritised the implementation of concrete and targeted measures aimed at enhancing understanding among States in the region of the HCCH's mandate and functioning, as well as the concrete benefits of the HCCH and its Conventions for States (for more information on these initiatives, please refer to section A of this document). Starting in 2026, ROAF will complement these outreach activities with activities specifically designed to support the active involvement of States and other stakeholders in the region in the HCCH's work, including in the context of the HCCH's legislative projects, activities facilitating the exchange of experiences and development of guidance on the operation of the HCCH Conventions, and governance meetings.

**C. Assisting States in the region in the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, including through the delivery of efficient, tailored post-Convention services and assistance**

18 In 2025, ROAF carried out preliminary preparations for a number of events to be held in 2026 aimed at supporting the implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, marking the beginning of its post-Convention activities.

19 In addition to working on the preparations for these events, in 2025 ROAF held a meeting with the International Social Service (ISS) to explore opportunities for future cooperation in supporting States with the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments in the area of international family and child protection law.

### III. Key upcoming projects and initiatives

20 In addition to its regular support of the work of the PB across all its divisions, ROAF intends to undertake the following specific activities in 2026:

- a. Organisation of an in-person training in Muscat for judges from Oman on the 1961 Apostille and 1980 Child Abduction Conventions in February 2026.
- b. Organisation of the 14<sup>th</sup> International Forum on the electronic Apostille Programme (e-APP), to be held in Morocco in May 2026. The International Forum on the e-APP gathers experts and stakeholders from around the world and provides a unique international platform for governments, organisations, and the private sector to learn more about the benefits of the e-APP, to promote its effective implementation, and to discuss the latest developments in relation to the e-APP worldwide. With the support of ROAF and the Ministry of Justice of Morocco, in 2026 the International Forum on the e-APP will be held in Africa for the first time, facilitating the participation of States and other stakeholders from the region.
- c. Organisation of two webinars on the implementation and operation of specific HCCH Conventions in 2026: a webinar on the 1961 Apostille Convention and a webinar on the 1980 Child Abduction Convention, both aimed at francophone African States.
- d. Conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with Mohammed V University in Rabat to facilitate cooperation in research activities, the organisation of seminars and trainings, and the incorporation of the HCCH Conventions in the university's curriculum.

### IV. Proposal for CGAP

21 The PB proposes the following Conclusions and Decision, covering all three ROs, for CGAP's consideration:

CGAP welcomed the reports of the Regional Office for Africa (ROAF), the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), and recognised the services they provide to HCCH Members. CGAP further:

- a. encouraged Members to offer concrete support towards the implementation of the activities and objectives of the ROs, including in the form of voluntary contributions, secondments, information, translations, and networking;
- b. invited States from the relevant regions that are currently considering the possibility of joining one or more HCCH Conventions, or of becoming HCCH Members, to contact their respective RO;
- c. invited National Organs, Central Authorities, and Competent Authorities to contact their relevant RO, where experience sharing with authorities of other Contracting Parties, or the academic sector, would be helpful to the effective implementation and operation of HCCH Conventions;
- d. invited States to facilitate, to the extent possible, the participation of their representatives to the meetings and events organised by the ROs.