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General Principles and International Uniform Commercial Law Conventions: A Study of the 1980 Vienna Sales Conventions and the 1988 UNIDROIT Conventions on International Factoring and Leasing

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I. Introduction

In the last few years, various works have been dedicated to the study of the general principles and their impact on domestic private law.1 But in order to obtain a more global view of the influence of the general principles, one cannot omit their impact as derived from supranational sources. It is particularly important to consider such influences on the private law as created by international uniform commercial law conventions.

Among the most important conventions on uniform commercial law in force are the 1980 United Nations Convention on

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1 See, e.g., GUIDO ALPA, PRINCIPI GENERALI (1995).
Contracts for the International Sale of Goods and the two 1988 Ottawa Conventions: International Factoring and International Financial Leasing. The CISG assumes importance due to its great success. This is evidenced by the number of contracting States and by the attention it has drawn from schol-


5 It has often been pointed out that the CISG is to be considered a great success. See e.g., Frank Diedrich, Lückenfüllung im internationalen Einheitsrecht. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen richterlicher Rechtsfortbildung im Wiener Kaufrecht, RECHT DER INTERNATIONALEN WIRTSCHAFT 353 (1995). Some commentators have suggested that the CISG even represents “the biggest success so far achieved by inter-governmental attempts at unification of commercial laws.” A. H. Herman, Business and the Law: Handle with Care - A.H. Hermann on some Pitfalls of Foreign Trade under the Vienna Convention, FIN. TIMES, Sept. 21, 1993, at Business Section 1.

6 The CISG is in force in the following countries: Argentina (January 1, 1988), Australia (April 1, 1989), Austria (January 1, 1989), Belarus (November 1, 1990), Belgium (November 1, 1997), Bosnia-Herzegovina (March 6, 1992), Bulgaria (August 1, 1991), Canada (May 1, 1992), Chile (March 1, 1991), China (January 1, 1988), Cuba (December 1, 1995), Czech Republic (January 1, 1993), Denmark (March 1, 1990), Ecuador (February 1, 1993), Egypt (January 1, 1988), Estonia (October 1, 1994), Finland (January 1, 1989), France (January 1, 1988), Georgia (September 1, 1996), Germany (January 1, 1991), Greece (February 1, 1999), Guinea (February 1, 1992), Hungary (January 1, 1988), Iraq (April 1, 1991), Italy (January 1, 1988), Latvia (August 1, 1998), Lesotho (January 1, 1988), Lithuania (February 1, 1996), Luxembourg (February 1, 1998), Mexico (January 1, 1989), Moldova (November 1, 1995), Mongolia (January 1, 1999), the Netherlands (January 1, 1992), New Zealand (October 1, 1995), Norway (August 1, 1989), Poland (June 1, 1996), Romania (June 1, 1992), Russian Federation (September 1, 1991), Singapore (March 1, 1996), Slovakia (January 1, 1993), Slovenia (June 25, 1991), Spain (August 1, 1991), Sweden (January 1, 1989), Switzerland (March 1, 1991), Syrian Arab Republic (January 1, 1988), Uganda (March 1, 1993), Ukraine (Febru-
ars and judges alike. The Ottawa Conventions are also of

ary 1, 1991), United States (January 1, 1988), Uzbekistan (December 1, 1997), Yugoslavia (January 1, 1988) and Zambia (January 1, 1988). For a recent list of Contracting States, see also UNIFORM L. REV. 143 (1996).


The CISG's importance in practice is evidenced by its numerous applications. In 1996, the CISG had already been applied nearly 300 times. See MICHAEL R. WILL, CISG: THE FIRST 284 OR SO DECISIONS (1996). Today, the CISG has been applied more than 350 times. See Pace University School of Law, Pace Law Library and the Institute of International Commercial Law (last modified Feb. 9, 1998) <http://www.cisg.law.pace.edu>.

notable importance, as they constitute the most recent uniform commercial law conventions to come into force.\(^9\)

This article examines the relationship between the general principles and these Conventions. Initially, this does not appear to be a problematic task, considering that Article 7(2) of the CISG, Article 4(2) of the Convention on International Factoring, and Article 6(2) of the Convention on International Financial Leasing make express reference to general principles.\(^10\) These Articles affirm that "questions concerning matters governed [by these Conventions] which are not expressly settled in [them] are to [be] settled in conformity with the general principles on which [they are] based."\(^11\) They also state that in the absence of these principles, such matters must be resolved in conformity with the law applicable by virtue of the rules of private international law. It appears, therefore, that the general

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In addition, other conventional drafts also make express reference to general principles. See, e.g., UNCITRAL Draft Uniform Rules on Assignment in Receivables Financing, art. 4(2) reprinted in UNCITRAL Doc. A/CN.9/432 (1996).

\(^11\) CISG, \textit{supra} note 2, art. 7(2).
principles, at least within the context of these Conventions, have the function of filling gaps.\textsuperscript{12} These gaps are inevitable, as such Conventions are not meant to be exhaustive;\textsuperscript{13} they govern only a limited number of matters. This inevitability derives from the fact that these conventions constitute a compromise between the different ideas expressed by national representatives of diverse economic, political, and legal systems, all promoting their own national interests.\textsuperscript{14}

By limiting oneself to the observation that general principles are to be used to fill these gaps, it is impossible to clarify some of the more important issues that the Articles raise. On the one hand, the specific identification of the general principles is referred to \textit{in abstracto}. On the other hand, it must be determined in which instances recourse must be derived from general principles (\textit{i.e.} the type of gaps to be filled by having recourse to such principles must be identified). Thus, the assertion that the general principles constitute the means to fill the gaps can only be a starting point and not the result of a study of the relationship between the uniform commercial law conventions and general principles.

\section*{II. Praetor Legem and Intra Legem Gaps}

No convention can, nor wants to, pose itself as an exhaustive body of rules.\textsuperscript{15} As such, the drafters of these Conventions included gap filling provisions.\textsuperscript{16} According to these rules, gaps are to be filled by having recourse to the general principles upon which each Convention is based. However, a more in depth inspection of the Articles which articulate this rule show that not

\textsuperscript{12} For a similar statement referring solely to Article 7(2) of the CISG, see Peter Schlechtriem, Internationales UN-Kaufrecht 31 (1996).
\textsuperscript{13} See Giuseppe Benedetti, Commento all'art. 4 della Convenzione di Vienna, Nuove Leggi civili commentate 9, (1989).
\textsuperscript{14} See, \textit{e.g.}, Gargiulo & Giancoli, \textit{La cessione del credito sotto la lente Unidroit}, Commercio internazionale 1305 (1993).
\textsuperscript{15} See Benedetti, \textit{supra} note 14, at 9.
\textsuperscript{16} One commentator has stated in regard to Article 7(2) of the CISG that “the justification of such a provision can be derived from the fact that it is hardly possible for an international group to draft a voluminous and complicated piece of legislation without leaving gaps behind.” Gyula Eörsi, \textit{General Provisions, in International Sales. The United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods} II-1, II-11 (Hans Smit and Nina Galston eds., 1984).
all the gaps are to be filled by resorting to general principles. In fact, the relevant Articles provide for recourse to general principles only with respect to matters that are governed by, but not expressly settled in, the Conventions. It follows that the gaps to which the rule is to be applied are not *intra legem* gaps (i.e. those relating to matters which are outside the ambit of application of the Conventions). Among these matters are those contemplated by Article 4(a) and (b) of the Vienna Convention. Such issues include "the validity of the contract or of any . . . usage," "the effect which the contract may have on the property in the goods sold," and those contemplated by Article 5 of the Vienna Convention, whereby it "does not apply to the liability of the seller for death or personal injury caused by the goods to any person."

The general principles are only contemplated for the purpose of filling *praetor legem* gaps. *Praetor legem* gaps are those...

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18 Note, however, that according to some authors, the issues falling outside the scope of a Convention should not all be labeled gaps. See Michael Joachim Bonell, *Art. 7, in Commentary on the International Sales Law: The 1980 Vienna Sales Convention* 75-76 (Cesare Massimo Bianca & Michael Joachim Bonell eds., 1987).

19 CISG, *supra* note 2, art. 4(a).

20 CISG, *supra* note 2, art. 4(b).


22 The use of the terminology *praetor legem* and *intra legem* gaps has recently been criticized. See Kramer, *supra* note 10, at 147 n.90.
relating to matters governed by the Conventions, but which they do not expressly resolve. In order to fill these gaps, which are sometimes referred to as internal gaps as opposed to external gaps, three different methods exist. The first method is based on the application of one of the Convention's general principles. This method is comparable to that used in civil law countries to fill gaps in their codes and has been labeled as a "true code" approach. The second method involves the application of the applicable "external" legal rules. This method

23 The "first condition for the existence of a gap in the sense of Article 7(2) is that the case at hand relates to 'matters governed by the Convention.'" Bonell, supra note 18, at 75.

24 For the use of these expressions, see Bettina Frigge, Externe Locken und internationales Privatrecht im UN-Kaufrecht (1994); Erik Jayme, La compravendita internazionale di beni mobili nei rapporti tra Italia e Germania 27 (1990); Schlechtriem, supra note 11, at 21; Peter Schlechtriem, Das Wiener Kaufrechtsübereinkommen von 1980 (Convention on Contracts for the International Sales of Goods), Praxis des internationalen Privat- und Verfahrensrechts 280 (1990).

25 William D. Hawkland, Uniform Commercial "Code" Methodology, 1962 U. ILL. L. F. 291, 292 (1962). The "true code" approach corresponds to the so-called "internal analogy approach". See Albert H. Kritzer, Guide to Practical Applications of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods 117 (1989). "[A] court should look no further than the code [or any kind of legislation] itself for solution to disputes governed by it - its purposes and policies should dictate the result even where there is no express language on point." Robert A. Hillman, Construction of the Uniform Commercial Code: UCC Section 1-103 and "Code" Methodology, 18 BRIT. COLUM. INDUS. & COM. L. REV. 655, 657 (1977). In other words, a true code "is comprehensive in that it is sufficiently inclusive and independent to enable it to be administered in accordance with its own basic policies." Hawkland, supra, at 292.

26 This approach seems to be favored in common law. See Issak I. Dore & James E. Defranco, A Comparison of the Non-Substantive Provisions of the UNICTRAL Convention on the International Sale of Goods and the Uniform Commercial Code, 23 HARV. INT'L L. J. 49, 63 (1982). The authors also assert that U.C.C. § 1-103, which provides that "[u]nless displaced by particular provisions of the Act, the principles of law and equity . . . shall supplement its provisions, . . . appears to support [the thesis of the U.C.C. being based upon] the common law approach." Id. at 64.

However, other commentators base their views on U.C.C. § 1-102(1) which states that "[t]his Act shall be liberally construed and applied to promote its underlying purposes and policies." U.C.C. § 1-102(1) affirms that "[t]he effect of this language [that is U.C.C. § 1-102(1)] is that the code not only has the force of law, but is itself a source of law." Mitchell Franklin, On the Legal Method of the Uniform Commercial Code, 16 LAW & CONTEMP. PROBS. 330, 333 (1951). This means that the U.C.C. is based upon a civil law approach. See id. The solution to the problem concerning the methodology adopted by the U.C.C. depends on the approach one takes to solve "[t]he tension that exists between section 1-103, which directs the courts to supplement the Code with outside law, and the true code
has been defined as a “meta-code” approach.\textsuperscript{27} The final method
is based on the combination of the first and second methods. This approach requires recourse to the general principles of the
Conventions, in the absence of which the specific rules of the
applicable law as determined by private international law of the
forum controls.\textsuperscript{28}

As can easily be deduced from the text of Articles 2 and 17
of the 1964 Uniform Law on International Sale of Goods (ULIS),
the predecessor of the CISG, its drafters chose the “true code”
approach.\textsuperscript{29} Indeed, “Article 2 of the ULIS excludes the application
of rules of private international law except in a few instances”\textsuperscript{30} and Article 17 of the ULIS provides that “the general
principles underlying the [1964] Uniform Law are to be used to
fill the law’s gaps. This has the intended negative implication
that courts may not refer to the domestic law of the country
whose law would otherwise apply under the rules of private in-
ternational law.”\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{27} See Steve H. Nickles, \emph{Problems of Sources of Law: Relationships under the
Uniform Commercial Code. Part I: The Methodological Problem and the Civil Law

\textsuperscript{28} See Franco Ferrari, \emph{Vendita internazionale. Art. 1-13. Ambito di appli-
cazione. Disposizioni generali} 153-54 (1994); Kritzer, \textsuperscript{supra} note 23, at 117; Jan
Kropholler, \emph{Der Ausschluß des IPR beim Einheitlichen Kaufrecht}, Rabels Zeit-

\textsuperscript{29} See Ferrari, \textsuperscript{supra} note 28, at 154; Eduard Wahl, \textit{Art. 17, in Kommentar

Note that the Hague Convention’s approach had already been promoted on the
occasion of the elaboration of earlier drafts, such as the one discussed during a
diplomatic conference held in 1951 in the Hague. See Ernst Rabel, \emph{The Hague
Conference on the Unification of Sales Law}, 1 AM. J. COMP. L. 58, 60 (1952). Rabel
states that “[w]ithin its corners, however, the text must be self-sufficient. Where a
case is not expressly covered the text is not to be supplemented by the national
laws - which would destroy unity - but be construed according to the principle con-
sonant with its spirit.” \textit{Id}.

\textsuperscript{30} Harold J. Berman, \textit{The Uniform Law on International Sale of Goods: A
Constructive Critique}, 30 LAW & CONTEMP. PROBS. 354, 359 (1965) (footnote omit-
ted). \textit{See also} Wahl, \textsuperscript{supra} note 29, at 126 (listing the three different approaches
to filling \textit{praetor legem} gaps). Wahl states that “the ULIS has adopted the first
method. The text of Article 17, its legislative history as well as the provision con-
templated in Article 2 show that the application of the rules of private interna-
tional law had to be limited.” Wahl, \textsuperscript{supra} note 29, at 126.

\textsuperscript{31} Peter Winship, \textit{Private International Law and the U.N. Sales Convention},
The drafters of the CISG, however, rejected this approach. The ULIS approach was often criticized as being "hardly acceptable."\textsuperscript{32} The CISG drafters adopted the approach which combines recourse to general principles with the eventual appeal to the relevant "external" provisions.\textsuperscript{33} This is to be determined by having recourse to the private international law of the forum, a choice that is based upon the consideration that "the absolute independence from domestic law that the ULIS had pursued was considered as being unreachable."\textsuperscript{34}

Resorting to general principles to fill internal gaps is a well-known method in civil law countries.\textsuperscript{35} This method "finds precedent in many codes of the Roman-German legal systems, even though among such codes there are differences."\textsuperscript{36} For example, the Preliminary Provisions of Article 12(2) of the Italian Civil Code provides that "if a controversy cannot be decided on the ground of a specific provision, one can resort to similar provisions or analogous matters; if the question remains doubtful, it shall be settled in conformity with the general principles of the legal system of the [Italian] State."\textsuperscript{37} Analogous provisions have also been introduced into other civil law systems, such as

\textsuperscript{32} That approach was unacceptable and was one of the reasons for the Hague Convention's failure. \textit{See} Dore & Defranco, \textit{supra} note 26, at 63.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{See} KRITZER, \textit{supra} note 25, at 117. Kritzer states that "[w]hen a matter is governed by the Convention but not expressly settled in it, the Convention's solution is (i) internal analogy where the Convention contains an applicable general principle; and (ii) reference to external legal principles (the rules of private international law) where the Convention does not contain an applicable general principle." \textit{Id.} See also Michael Joachim Bonell, \textit{La nouvelle Convention des Nations Unies sur les contrats de vente internationale de marchandises, Droit et pratique du commerce international} 7, 15 (1981).

\textsuperscript{34} ALDO FRIGNANI, \textit{IL CONTRATTO INTERNAZIONALE} 308 (1990).

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{See supra} note 25 and accompanying text. \textit{See also} JOHN O. HONNOLD, \textit{Uniform Law for International Sales under the 1980 United Nation Convention} (2nd ed., 1989). The CISG provision contemplating the settlement of questions governed by, but not expressly settled in it by resorting to its general principles "reflects an approach established for civil law codes." \textit{Id.} See also ALEJANDRO GARRO and ALBERTO ZUPPI, \textit{COMPRAVENTA INTERNACIONAL DE MERCADERIAS} 58 (1990).

\textsuperscript{36} FRIGNANI, \textit{supra} note 34, at 308.

\textsuperscript{37} Codice civile, art. 12(2)
that of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Spain, and others.

In common law, the concept of "general principles" differs from that of civil law. This is due, in part, to the "diverse notions and functions of the general principles" and, in part, to the diverse source from which general principles are derived. In fact, in civil law the source is the legislation, whereas in common law, the source is represented by case law. It follows that in common law,

38 See Art. 7 Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch [ABGD] (Aus. Civil Code). "Where a case cannot be decided either according to the literal text or the plain meaning of a statute, regard shall be had to the statutory provisions concerning similar cases . . . . If the case still remains doubtful, it shall be decided [ ] on the ground of principles of natural law." Id.


40 See CIVIL CODE art. 1(2) (1948) (Egypt). See also Bonell, supra note 18, at 77 (citing this provision).


42 In this respect, one must note that even "in countries such as France or the Federal Republic of Germany, where the approach is not formally imposed by statute, it is taken for granted that a Code or any other legislation of a more general character must be considered as more than the mere sum of its individual provisions. In fact, it must be interpreted and, if necessary, supplemented on the basis of the general principles which underlie its specific provisions," Bonell, supra note 18, at 77. See also 1 KONRAD ZWEIGERT & HEIN KOTZ, EINFÜHRUNG IN DIE RECHTSVERGLEICHUNG AUF DEM GEBIETE DES PRIVATRECHTS 103 (2nd ed., 1982).

43 Indeed, it has been pointed out that "the term [general principles] sounds alien to English lawyers." Neville Brown, General Principles of Law and the English Legal System, in NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR A COMMON LAW OF EUROPE 174 (Mauro Cappelletti ed., 1978).

44 FRIGNANI, supra note 34, at 308.

45 See Ferrari, supra note 17, at 846.

46 See Otto Kahn-Freund, Common Law and Civil Law - Imaginary and Real Obstacles to Assimilation, in NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR A COMMON LAW OF EUROPE 154 (Mauro Cappelletti ed., 1978). The author states that "in the common law world, the lawyer looks for his principles in the 'cases', and the statutes merely fill in details, the 'case law' playing the role of Codes on the Continent." Id.
Statutory law is seen as only fixing rules for defined situations, not as a possible source of general principles. As such, not only are the statutes traditionally interpreted in a very strict sense, but if there is no provision specifically regulating the case at hand, the gap will immediately be filled by principles and rules of the judge-made common law. 47

The method adopted by the Vienna and Ottawa Conventions is a “mixed” one, obligating the judge to find a solution within the single convention 48 by resorting to its general principles. Only where this is unsatisfactory may the judge take “external” rules into account. The adoption of this method is undoubtedly to be welcomed, since it ultimately promotes uniformity, which is the goal of every uniform commercial law convention. In fact, uniformity would be compromised if the different judges always had to employ different domestic laws in order to fill the inevitable gaps. 49

It must be noted that to close praetor legem gaps from within a Convention, one can resort to various types of logical reasoning. In this respect, application of the general principles constitutes merely one method. 50 This is why one must determine whether Article 7(2) of the CISG, Article 4(2) of the Factoring Convention, and Article 6(2) of the Leasing Convention must be interpreted broadly, or whether the Articles must be interpreted restrictively. A broad interpretation allows the use of other methods of legal reasoning, specifically that of analogy. 51

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47 Bonell, supra note 18, at 77-78. See also Michael Joachim Bonell, L’interpretazione del diritto uniforme alla luce dell’art. 7 della Convenzione di Vienna sulla vendita internazionale, RIVISTA DI DIRITTO CIVILE 221, 233 (1986).

48 See Fritz Enderlein & Dietrich Maskow, INTERNATIONAL SALES LAW 58 (1992) (stating, albeit with reference solely to the CISG, but which is equally true for the Ottawa Conventions as well, that the gap filling rule’s major concern is indeed that the gaps are “closed . . . from within the Convention”). “This is in line with the aspiration to unify the law which . . . is established in the Convention itself.” Id.

49 See Bonell, supra note 18, at 75.


51 See JAN KROPHOLLER, INTERNATIONALES EINHEITSRECHT. ALLGEMEINE LEHREN 292 (1975) (commenting on the difference between analogy and recourse to general principles).
With reference to this question, one can not only share the view of those legal scholars who expressed, in respect to the CISG and the other Conventions, that these Conventions permit both methods (recourse to general principles and analogy), but also that "in the case of a gap in a Convention the first attempt to be made is to settle the unsolved question by means of an analogical application of specific provisions." When the matter expressly settled in a Convention and the matter to be decided on are not so closely related that it would be justified to adopt a different solution, one should resort to the general principles as contemplated in Article 7(2) of the CISG, Article 4(2) of the Factoring Convention and Article 6(2) of the Leasing Convention. In such instances, one should resort to a procedure which differs from analogy in that it does not resolve the case solely by extending specific provisions dealing with analogous matters, "but on the basis of principles and rules which, because of their general character, may be applied on a much wider scale."

III. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE VIENNA CONVENTION

The rule previously laid down for Article 7(2) of the CISG, as it relates to the identification of the praetor legem gaps, is also valid for Article 4(2) of the Factoring Convention and Article 6(2) of the Leasing Convention. However, in order to identify the general principles, these conventions require individual consideration. Each Convention stipulates that praetor legem

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53 Bonell, supra note 18, at 78. The analogical application as a method of gap filling has been admitted by other commentators of the gap-filling rule de quo as well. See, e.g., Enderlein & Maskow, supra note 46, at 58. The authors state that "gap-filling can be done, as we believe, by applying such interpretation methods as extensive interpretation and analogy. The admissibility of analogy is directly addressed in the wording contained in the CISG [as well as in the UNIDROIT Conventions] because it is aimed at obtaining, from several comparable rules, one rule for a not expressly covered fact and/or a general rule under which the fact can be subsumed." Enderlein & Maskow, supra note 48, at 58.
54 See, e.g., Ferrari, supra note 50, at 548 (referring solely to the CISG).
55 Bonell, supra note 18, at 80.
gaps are to be filled by resorting to the general principles upon which each Convention is based.

From this wording it follows, not only that each Convention has to be looked at separately, but also that no recourse can be given to "external" general principles, such as the "Principles of International Commercial Contracts,"\(^{57}\) drafted by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT),\(^{58}\) in order to fill the gaps to be found in these Conventions.\(^{59}\) In regard to Article 7(2) of the Vienna Convention, Article 4(2) of the Convention on International Factoring and Article 6(2) of the International Leasing Convention, it can be inferred that the general principles to which one may have recourse are necessarily principles upon which these Conventions


\(^{58}\) UNIDROIT is an international body that promotes uniformity in the law of international commerce. For an overview on the recent activities of UNIDROIT, see Malcolm Evans, Unidroit in 1995, Uniform L. Rev. 72 (1996). For an overview of the existing international bodies promoting the unification of law, see Rudolf Dolzer, International Agencies for the Formulation of Transnational Economic Law, in 2 The Transnational Law of International Commercial Transactions 61, 65-75 (Norbert Horn & Clive M. Schmitthoff eds., 1982).

considered individually, are based. Additionally, these principles may correspond to “external” general principles of international commerce. In this instance, the principles to be applied to fill gaps are always, unless otherwise agreed by the parties, those upon which the Convention is based. Other “general principles,” independent of their form, may, if necessary, serve to corroborate a solution based on the Convention’s general principles or to interpret the latter. They cannot, however, be used as an independent source of gap filling.

It is appropriate at this point to specify the general principles upon which these Conventions are based. With respect to the CISG, some of the general principles can easily be identified since they are expressly provided. Many legal scholars argue, albeit not all, that the principle of good faith, which had already been considered a general principle under the regime of paragraphs.

60 See Ulrich Drobnig, The Use of Unidroit Principles by National and Supranational Courts, Speech delivered on the occasion of the colloquium, “International Commercial Contracts and the New Unidroit Principles: A New Law Merchant,” held in Paris (October 20-21, 1994). Drobnig stated that “Art. 7 para. 2 [of the CISG] refers for matters governed by the Convention to the general principles on which the Convention is based . . . [a]nd if there are no such principles, the provision refers to the law applicable by virtue of the rules of private international law . . . Thus there does not seem to be any room for recourse to the Unidroit Principles.” Id.

61 It has been pointed out, for instance, that the general principles of the CISG largely correspond to those elaborated by UNIDROIT. See Magnus, supra note 56, at 492.

62 The importance of party autonomy for the application of the Unidroit Principles of International Commercial Contracts has been stressed by some. See Franco Ferrari, I “Principi per i contratti commerciali internazionali” dell’Unidroit ed i loro ambito di applicazione, CONTRATTO E IMPRESA 300, 304-06 (1996).

63 See Klaus Peter Berger, Formalisierte und “schleichende” Kodifizierung des transnationalen Wirtschaftsrechts (1996) (discussing this issue).


66 There are legal scholars who consider “good faith” as being a mere instrument of interpretation. See Ferrari, supra note 41, at 210-12. This view is based upon the fact that “good faith” is only mentioned in Article 7(1) of the CISG, that, is, in the provision dealing with the interpretation of the CISG which stipulates that “[i]n the application of this Convention, regard is to be had to its international character and to the need to promote uniformity in its application and the obser-
the ULIS,\(^{67}\) constitutes a general principle under the CISG.\(^ {68}\)

\(^{67}\) "Good faith" has been considered a general principle of the ULIS. See Hans Dölle, Bemerkungen zu Art. 17 des Einheitsgesetzes über den Internationalen Kauf beweglicher körperlicher Gegenstände, in FESTSCHRIFT FÜR HANS G. FICKER 438 (1967); Wahl, supra note 29, at 135. Note, however, that this view was not necessarily unanimously held, although some court decisions can be found which apply "good faith" as a general principle of the ULIS. See, e.g., OLG Düsseldorf, January 20 1983, reprinted in INTERNATIONALE RECHTSprechung zu EKG UND EAG 100 (Peter Schlechtriem & Ulrich Magnus eds., 1987). Indeed, under the ULIS there was some opposition to the introduction of a "good faith" provision and to considering "good faith" as being a general principle. See Alejandro Garro, Reconciliation of Legal Traditions in the U.N. Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods, 23 INT'L LAW. 443, 466 (1989). Garro recalls that "as early as the Hague Diplomatic Conference in 1964, explicit reference to good faith as a general principle was opposed by the French delegate [who] asserted that the principle of good faith might lead to divergent and even arbitrary interpretations by national courts, and thus would impair uniformity." \textit{Id.}

\(^{68}\) The "good faith principle" has been recognized as one of the general principles expressly laid down by the Convention. See \textsc{Bernard Audit, La vente internationale} 51 (1990) (stating that good faith is one of the general principles, even though it must be considered an instrument of interpretation as well, considering that "good faith" is expressly mentioned only in Article 7(1) of the CISP, the provision dealing with its interpretation); Issak I. Dore & James E. Defranco, \textit{A Com-
Another principle, which is expressly provided for, is, *inter alia*, the principle of party autonomy, which some commentators have even defined as the Convention's most important general principle. Consequently, it appears that the Convention only has a subsidiary role, that is, that it merely provides solutions to problems, which are not dealt with by the parties. If this affirmation is true, then it must be concluded that in the case of a conflict between the party autonomy principle and any other general principle, the former must prevail. This is "a result contrary to the Uniform Commercial Code where the principles

69 Party autonomy is considered as being one of the CISG's general principles. See Michael Joachim Bonell, *Commento all'art. 7 della Convenzione di Vienna*, Nuove Leggi Civili Commentate 20, 24 (1989); Enderlein & Maskow, supra note 48, at 59 (listing the "good faith principle" among those general principle "which do not necessarily have to be reflected in individual rules"); Rolf Herber and Beate Czerwenka, *Internationales Kaufrecht. Kommentar zu dem Obereinkommen der Vereinten Nationen vom 11. April 1980 über Verträge über den Internationalen Warenkauf 49* (1991) (affirming even that the "good faith principle" represents the only general principle expressly provided for by the CISG).

70 See Honnold, supra note 35, at 47. Honnold states that "the dominant theme of the Convention is the role of the contract (i.e., the parties' autonomy)[,] . . . a theme of deeper significance than may be evident at first glance." *Id.*

71 See, e.g., Kritzer, supra note 25, at 114 (stating that "the Convention's rules play a supporting role, supplying answers to problems that the parties have failed to solve by contract."). See also Kazuaki Sono, *The Vienna Sales Convention: History and Perspectives, in International Sale of Goods. Dubrovnik Lectures* 1, 14 (stating that "the rules contained in the Convention are only supplementary for those cases where the parties did not provide otherwise in their contract").


73 For this solution, see Kritzer, supra note 25, at 115.

This conclusion referred to in the text appears to be further sustained by the fact that on the occasion of the Vienna Diplomatic Conference where the CISG was adopted, a proposal to limit the principle of party autonomy through a reference to the "good faith principle" was rejected. See, e.g., *United Nations Conference on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods. Vienna, 10 March - 11 April 1980. Official Records 247-248* (United Nations ed., 1981).
of ‘good faith, diligence and reasonableness and care’ prevail over party autonomy.”74

There are other expressly enunciated general principles as well. These general principles include: the principle of informality,75 according to which “the agreement between the parties is not subject to any formal requirement,”76 with the exception of the hypothesis provided for by Article 12; the principle whereby widely known and largely observed usage’s must be taken into account;77 the principle which states, “where a party fails to pay an amount of money, the creditor is entitled to interest on that sum;”78 the rule derived from civil law79 which limits recoverable damages to those foreseen or foreseeable prior to or at the conclusion of the contract;80 and the principle of full compensation.81 Another principle is the one “according to which any notice or other kind of communication made or given after the conclusion of the contract becomes effective on dispatch.”82

74 Kritzer, supra note 25, at 115.
76 Bonell, supra note 18, at 80. See also CISG, supra note 2, art.11, 29(1).
78 Audit, supra note 68, at 51. See Ferrari, supra note 28, at 160. See also CISG supra note 2, art. 78.
81 See Magnus, supra note 56, at 484-85.
82 Bonell, supra note 18, at 80. See also Enderlein & Maskow, supra note 48, at 59; CISG, supra note 2, art. 27.
Most of the general principles of the CISG have not been expressly provided for. Therefore, many of the general principles must be deduced from the CISG's provisions by way of a non-comparative analysis of their contents. This method is necessary "in order to see whether [the provisions] can be considered as an expression of a more general principle, as such capable of being applied also to cases different from those specifically regulated." It has led to the extraction of several general principles. One general principle is the principle of "reasonableness," where "the parties must conduct themselves according to the standard of the reasonable person."

The "UNIDROIT Principles," particularly Article 1.9, which some authors would like to have recourse to in order to fill praetor legem gaps, provides for a principle contrary to the one mentioned in the text. See discussion supra note 59.

From what has been said, it becomes apparent that it is dangerous to fill internal gaps of the CISG (but this is also true in respect to the Ottawa Conventions on International Factoring and International Leasing) by resorting to the external "UNIDROIT Principles," since they encompass, as just shown, principles which, at least partially, do not correspond to the "internal" principles of the CISG (and may be even other international uniform law conventions).

One cannot share the opinion (favored, for instance, by Bonell, supra note 18, at 81) according to which the comparative method could be useful in identifying the general principles at hand; indeed, "[it is...not possible to obtain the Convention's general principles from an analysis prepared by comparisons of the laws of the most important legal systems of the Contracting States...as it was supported, in some cases, in regard to Article 17 ULIS...The wording of the Convention does in no way support the application of this method [sic]."] ENDERLEIN & MASKOW, supra note 48, at 60.

For similar affirmations rejecting the comparative method as one which can be helpful in identifying the general principles of an international uniform commercial law convention, see FRITZ ENDERLEIN ET AL., INTERNATIONALES KAUFRECHT 65 (1991); Herber, supra note 75, at 99; PETER SCHLECHTRIEM, EINHEITLICHES UN-KAUFRECHT 24 (1981).

See Magnus, supra note 56, at 476 (stating that it should with no doubt be used, as long as it is not abused).

Bonell, supra note 18, at 80.

See Audit, supra note 68, at 51; FRIGNANI, supra note 35, at 308; KAROLLUS, supra note 69, at 16-17; KRITZER, supra note 25, at 116; Magnus, supra note 56, at 482; Maskow, supra note 80, at 57; GERT REINHART, INTERNATIONALES KAUFRECHT 32 (1991).

For a recent study of the concept of "reasonableness" in international contracts, see Vincente Fortier, Le contrat de commerce international à l'aune du raisonnable, JOURNAL DU DROIT INTERNATIONAL 315 (1996).

Another is a "fundamental principle" which the Convention refers to on several occasions. A "fundamental principle" may occur where the parties are referred to as "reasonable" or where it imposes upon the parties the duty to carry out a specific act or to make a specific communication within a "reasonable" period of time.

There are other general principles that can be deduced from the Convention’s provisions. It is sufficient to recall the "mitigation" principle, where the parties must undertake reasonable steps to limit the loss resulting from the breach of contract, and the principle whereby the parties must not venire contra factum proprium, which results in preventing "a person from contradicting a representation on which another person has reasonably relied." Another general principle is favor contractus "which means that, whenever possible, a solution should be adopted in favor of the valid existence of the contract and against its premature termination on the initiative of one of the parties." Additionally, there is the principle

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89 Schlechtriem, supra note 84, at 25.
90 See CISG, supra note 2, arts. 8(2), 25, 35(1)(b), 60(a), 72(2), 79(1), 85, 86, 88(2).
91 See CISG, supra note 2, arts. 18(2), 33(3), 39(1), 43(1), 47(1), 49(2), 63, 64, 65, 72(2), 75.
Note, however, that on several occasions the Convention refers to "unreasonableness," instead of "reasonableness." See Magnus, supra note 56, at 482 n.47. See, e.g., CISG supra note 2, arts. 86(2), 87, 88(2).
92 See Ferrari, supra note 41, at 225; Honnold, supra note 35, at 155.
93 This principle is considered one of the CISG’s general principles. See Audit, supra note 68, at 52; Bonell, supra note 69, at 25; Ferrari, supra note 28, at 161; Frignani, supra note 34, at 308; Karollus, supra note 69, at 17; Magnus, supra note 56, at 483.
94 See, e.g., Enderlein et al., supra note 84, at 64; Eorsi, supra note 16, at II-12; Herber, supra note 75, at 99; Magnus, supra note 65, at 122, 125; Maskow, supra note 80, at 57; Reinhart, supra note 87, at 32.
95 Honnold, supra note 35, at 153. See also Frignani, supra note 34, at 308; Magnus, supra note 56, at 481.
96 See Ernst von Caemmerer, Die wesentliche Vertragsverletzung im internationalen Einheitlichen Kaufrecht, in 2 Europäisches Rechtsdenken in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Festschrift für Coing 50-51 (1982); Ferrari, supra note 41, at 225; Vincent Heuzé, La vente internationale de marchandises. Droit uniforme 80 (1992); Honnold, supra note 39, at 140; Plantard, supra note 77, at 333.
97 Bonell, supra note 18, at 81. See also Rosenberg, supra note 66, at 452. Rosenberg states that "where possible, solutions favouring the maintenance of the contract should be adopted in preference to solutions resulting in the premature termination of the contract on the initiative of one party." Id.
whereby the parties must cooperate98 "in carrying out the inter-
locking steps of an international [sales] transaction."99 This 
comprises the duty to provide the other party with all necessary 
information,100 and calls for "communication of information 
that is obviously needed by a trading partner."101 The latter 
can be derived from Article 39(1), according to which a buyer is 
under a duty to give the seller notice of the non-conformity of 
the goods within a reasonable period of time so that the seller 
may "examine the goods and formulate his response to the 
buyers contentions."102

IV. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE OTTAWA CONVENTIONS

While identifying the Vienna Sales Convention's general 
principles does not constitute an overly problematic task, the 
same cannot be said of the Ottawa Conventions' general princi-
pies. This is due to the fact that the latter succinctly regulates 
more specific matters than those dealt with by the Vienna Sales 
Convention. Some authors have even considered the CISG as 
laying down a general framework not only for international 
sales contracts, but for international commercial contracts as 
well.103

This does not mean that a list of general principles upon 
which the Ottawa Conventions are based cannot be drafted. 
One of the general principles which forms the basis of the Fac-

98 See Enderlein & Maskow, supra note 48, at 60; Karollus, supra note 69, 
at 16 n.88; Ferrari, supra note 41, at 226.
99 Kritzer, supra note 25, at 115.
100 See Audit, supra note 68, at 51; Hyland, supra note 69, at 331-32.
101 Honnold, supra note 35, at 155.
102 Franco Frattini, Commento all'art. 39 della Convenzione di Vienna, Nuove 
103 See Aleksander Goldstajn, Usages of Trade and other Autonomous Rules of 
International Trade according to the UN (1980) Sales Convention, in Interna-
tional Sale of Goods. Dubrovnik Lectures 55. Goldstajn states that "the 
formally confined to contracts for the international sale of goods, contains provisions 
which could be applied to all kinds of international commercial transactions." Id. 
See also Magnus, supra note 56, at 491.

But cf. Franz Bydlinski, Das allgemeine Vertragsrecht, in Das UN-CITRAL-
kaufrecht im Vergleich zum österreichischen Recht 57, 89 (Peter Doralt ed., 
1985) (in the sense that he refuses to consider the CISG's rules as a basis for 
solving problems arising from international commercial transactions different 
than sales contracts).
The factoring Convention appears to be that of party autonomy. This view is based upon the text of Article 3(1), which establishes that the parties may exclude the application of the Convention at hand, thus, confirming its dispositive nature. However, in light of Article 3, and its comparison with Article 6 of the CISG, it is doubtful whether party autonomy must really be considered a general principle of the Factoring Convention. This is due to its somewhat limited scope compared to that of party autonomy under the CISG. According to the CISG, the parties may not only exclude the Convention's application *in toto* or even partially, but they may also derogate from its provisions with one exception or modify its effects. Whereas according to Article 3(2) of the Factoring Convention, the parties may only exclude its application *in toto*.

A “true” general principle of the Factoring Convention appears under Article 6(1), where assignments of receivables are encouraged. Accordingly, assignment of receivables is al-

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104 See Gargiulo & Giancoli, supra note 14, at 1303. The authors state that “by virtue of the principle of party autonomy, the parties are allowed to exclude the [Factoring] Convention's application.” Id.

105 See Convention on International Factoring, supra note 3, art. 3. Article 3 states that “[t]he application of this Convention may be excluded (a) by the parties to the factoring contract; or (b) by the parties to the contract of sale of goods, as regards receivables arising at or after the time when the factor has been given notice in writing of such exclusion.” Id.

106 See CISG, supra note 2, art. 6. Article 6 states that “[t]he parties may exclude the application of the Convention or, subject to article 12, derogate from or vary the effects of any of its provisions.” Id.


108 See Convention on International Factoring, supra note 3, art. 3(2). Article 3(2) states that “[w]here the application of this Convention is excluded in accordance with the previous paragraph, such exclusion may be made only as regards the Convention as a whole.” Id.

109 See Alexander, supra note 21, at 375 n.107.

110 See Convention on International Factoring, supra note 3, art. 6(1). Article 6(1) states that “[t]he assignment of a receivable by the supplier to the factor shall be effective notwithstanding any agreement between the supplier and the debtor prohibiting such assignment.” Id.
lowed even in the presence of a *pactum de non-cedendo*.

Another general principle can be derived from Article 5, which considers valid not only the assignment of single existing receivables but also the assignment of single future receivables as well as bulk assignments. Finally, a general principle can be found in Article 10(1). As a general rule, this provision bars the debtor from recovering a sum paid to the assignee if he is entitled to recover that sum from the supplier, thus protecting the assignee’s reliance and, consequently, his willingness to purchase receivables.

Similar to the CISG, the Factoring Convention seems to be based upon the principle of good faith. Indeed, good faith is not only mentioned as an interpretative criterion provided for by Article 4(1) of the Factoring Convention, but it is also

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111 See Alessio Zaccaria, *Il factoring internazionale*, STUDIUM IURIS 5, 10 (1996) (pointing out that the fact that the agreement of the parties as to the non-assignability of the receivables does not lead to the ineffectiveness of the assignment and does not signify that it does not have any effect. Indeed, Article 6(2) expressly stipulates that the breach of that agreement can lead to liability).

112 See *Convention on International Factoring*, supra note 3, art. 5. Article 5 states that:

(a) a provision in the factoring contract for the assignment of existing or future receivables shall not be rendered invalid by the fact that the contract does not specify them individually, if at the time of conclusion of the contract or when they come into existence they can be identified to the contract;

(b) a provision in the factoring contract by which future receivables are assigned operates to transfer the receivables to the factor when they come into existence without the need for any new act or transfer.

Id.

113 The aforementioned provisions aim at promoting the assignment of receivables. See Gargiulo & Giancoli, supra note 14, at 1303-04.

114 See *Convention on International Factoring*, supra note 3, art. 10. Article 10 states that:

[w]ithout prejudice to the debtor’s rights under Article 9, non-performance or defective or late performance of the contract of sale of goods shall not by itself entitle the debtor to recover a sum paid by the debtor to the factor if the debtor has a right to recover that sum from the supplier.

Id.

115 See Gargiulo & Giancoli, supra note 14, at 1304.

116 See supra text accompanying notes 66-75.

117 See *Convention on International Factoring*, supra note 3, art. 4(1). Article 4(1) states that “in the interpretation of this Convention, regard is to be had to its object and purpose as set forth in the preamble, to its international character and to the need to promote uniformity in its application and the observance of good faith in international trade.” Id.
mentioned in Article 6. Article 6 validates the assignment of receivables despite the existence of a non-assignment clause. In effect, this provision places upon the supplier "an indispensable general duty of good faith . . . towards the debtor for breach of the non-assignability clause contained in the sales contract."\(^{118}\)

The Factoring Convention is also based on the general principle which prohibits an assignment from placing the debtor in a disadvantageous position compared to that which he would find himself had the assignment not taken place.\(^{119}\) This principle may easily be deduced from Article 9, which allows the debtor to raise all defenses against the assignee which he could raise against the supplier if such claim had been made by the debtor. This is true when there is a claim by the assignee against the debtor.\(^{120}\) This principle may also be inferred from Article 6(3), which, even though it validates the assignment of receivables in the presence of a pactum de non-cedendo, upholds the supplier's liability towards the debtor.\(^{121}\)

Having identified the general principles which form the basis of the Factoring Convention, all that remains is to determine the formative general principles of Leasing Convention. One of these principles is that of party autonomy.\(^{122}\) Party autonomy may be derived from Article 5, which, not unlike Article 6 of the CISG and Article 3 of the Factoring Convention, allows the par-

\(^{118}\) Gargiulo & Giancoli, supra note 14, at 1304.

\(^{119}\) See Zaccaria, supra note 111, at 11.

\(^{120}\) See Convention on International Factoring, supra note 3, art. 9. Article 9 states that:

1. In a claim by the factor against the debtor for payment of a receivable arising under a contract of sale of goods the debtor may set up against the factor all defenses arising under that contract of which the debtor could have availed itself if such claim had been made by the supplier.

2. The debtor may also assert against the factor any right of set off in respect of claims existing against the supplier in whose favor the receivables arose and which are available to the debtor at the time a notice in writing of the assignment conforming to Article 8(1) was given to the debtor.

\(^{121}\) See Convention on International Factoring, supra note 3, art. 6(3). Article 6(3) states that "[n]othing in paragraph 1 shall affect any obligation of good faith owed by the supplier to the debtor or any liability of the supplier to the debtor in respect of an assignment made in breach of the terms of the contract of sale of goods." Id. See also supra text accompanying note 118.

\(^{122}\) See Schermi, Il leasing finanziario e la Convenzione internazionale di Ottawa 28 maggio, Giustizia civile 725, 727 (1994).
ties to exclude the Convention’s application. Unlike the Factoring Convention, which accords party autonomy a limited role by allowing only a total exclusion of the Convention, Article 5 of the Leasing Convention also permits the parties to derogate from or modify the effect of any provision, except for some specific ones protecting the lessee. An example of this protection is Article 8(2), under which the lessor must warrant that the lessee’s quiet possession will not be disturbed. It follows that even though it may be doubtful whether party autonomy constitutes one of the Factoring Convention’s general principles, this provision certainly must be regarded as one of the basic formative general principles of the Leasing Convention.

Another general principle of the Leasing Convention is the protection of the lessee’s interests. This can be deduced from the impossibility to derogate from specific provisions designed for the protection of the lessee, but also from Article 13 of the Convention. According to Article 13, in case of termination of the leasing agreement due to the lessee’s substantial default, the lessor may merely “recover such damages as will place [him] in the position in which [he] would have been had the lessee

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123 See supra text accompanying note 109.
124 See Convention on International Factoring, supra note 3, art. 5. Article 5 states:

(1) The application of this Convention may be excluded only if each of the parties to the supply agreement and each of the parties to the leasing agreement agree to exclude it.

(2) Where the application of this Convention has not been excluded in accordance with the previous paragraph, the parties may, in their relations with each other, derogate from or vary the effect of any of its provisions except as stated in Articles 8(3) and 13(3)(b) and (4). Id.
125 See Mariani, supra note 10, at 566.
126 See Renato Clarizia, La convenzione UNIDROIT sulla locazione finanziaria: analogie e differenze rispetto al modello italiano, RIVISTA ITALIANA DI LEASING 28.
128 See Friedrich Graf von Westphalen, Grenzüberschreitendes Finanzierungsleasing, RECHT DER INTERNATIONALEN WIRTSCHAFT 257, 257 (1992) (stating that the impossibility of derogating from some specific provisions does not unduly limit party autonomy, which is why it must be considered a general principle upon which the Leasing Convention is based).
129 See supra text accompanying note 126.
performed the leasing agreement in accordance with its terms.”

There are several other general principles in the Leasing Convention. One of these general principles is the so-called *favor contractus*, according to which the lessor may terminate the contract only where the lessee's breach is substantial. Another principle, which in German law goes by the name of *Zugum-Zug-Leistung*, must also be considered a general principle which helps form the basis of Convention. This can be deduced from Article 12(3), which states that the “lessee shall be entitled to withhold rentals payable under the leasing agreement until the lessor has remedied its failure to tender equipment in conformity with the supply agreement or the lessee has lost the right to reject the equipment.” According to some authors, another general principle can be found in Article 7, by virtue of which the lessor's rights in the equipment are valid against the trustee in bankruptcy of the lessee and his creditors.

One last general principle upon which the Leasing Convention is based is the mitigation principle. This also is a foundational principle of the CISG. This may be easily deduced from Article 13(6), which states that “[t]he lessor shall not be entitled to recover damages to the extent that it has failed to take all reasonable steps to mitigate its loss.”

V. CONCLUSION

One final comment must be addressed to the relationship between general principles and the Vienna and Ottawa Conventions. It is necessary to show how *praetor legem* gaps are to be filled when resorting to general principles is not possible. All three Conventions respond to such an eventuality in the same

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130 Convention on International Financial Leasing, supra note 4, art. 13(2)(b).

131 See Graf von Westphalen, supra note 128, at 257.

132 See Schermi, supra note 122, at 727.

133 Compare CISG, supra note 2, art. 7 with De Nova, supra note 9, at 426 (where the author even defines this principle as a “fundamental” one).

134 See supra text accompanying notes 92-93.
way. In the absence of general principles, recourse should be made to the “law applicable by virtue of the rules of private international law.”\(^\text{135}\) This is a “subsidiary method”\(^\text{136}\) which despite the lack of a specific reference to it, found support under the ULIS as well,\(^\text{137}\) even though the prevailing opinion was to the contrary.\(^\text{138}\) In fact, most authors supported the view that, absent general principles of the ULIS, these gaps were not to be filled by resorting to the applicable domestic law to be determined through the relevant rules of private international law, but by resorting to the general principles of law.\(^\text{139}\) These general principles of law are defined as “principles and rules which are most commonly adopted within the different Contracting States and/or particularly suited for the case at hand.”\(^\text{140}\) However, even this approach was not exempt from criticism. It has been correctly observed that the identification of such principles placed a difficult, if not impossible,\(^\text{141}\) burden upon those having to fill the gaps, considering that not even specialists had been able to identify such principles.\(^\text{142}\)

At this time, such a dispute is meaningless. All the Conventions in question stipulate that, in the absence of general principles upon which they are based, recourse is to be had -

\(^{135}\) CISG, supra note 2, art. 7(2); Convention on International Factoring, supra note 3, art. 4(2); Convention on International Financial Leasing, supra note 4, art. 6(2).

\(^{136}\) See AUDIT, supra note 68, at 52; HEUZE, supra note 96, at 80; Rosenberg, supra note 64, at 450.

\(^{137}\) For an overview of the authors who supported the recourse to the general principles underlying the ULIS to fill its praetor legem gaps, see Rolf Herber, Art. 7, in KOMMENTAR ZUM EINHEITLICHEN UN-KAUFRECHT 93 (Peter Schlechtriem ed., 1st ed., 1990); Ulrich Magnus, Währungsfragen im Einheitlichen Kaufrecht. Zugleich ein Beitrag zu seiner Lückenfüllung und Auslegung, RABELS ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR AUSLÄNDISCHES UND INTERNATIONALES PRIVATRECHT 116, 120 (1989).

\(^{138}\) See Bonell, supra note 18, at 82. Bonell states that “with respect to ULIS it was already questioned whether turning to domestic law should be permitted if a gap could not be filled by general principles which could be extracted from the uniform law itself. The prevailing view was opposed to this approach.” Id.

\(^{139}\) For a recent discussion of the general principles of law, see Guido Alpa, General Principles of Law, 1 ANNUAL SURVEY OF INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE LAW 1 (1994).

\(^{140}\) Bonell, supra note 18, at 82.

\(^{141}\) See, e.g., Rosenberg, supra note 66, at 450.

\(^{142}\) See Kropholler, supra note 28, at 380.
albeit as *ultima ratio*\(^{143}\) - to "the law applicable by virtue of the rules of private international law" of the forum.\(^{144}\) This does not mean that recourse to the rules of private international law should be abused.\(^{145}\) One has to be aware of the fact that recourse to these rules "represents under the . . . uniform law[s] a last resort to be used only if and to the extent that a solution cannot be found either by analogical application of specific provisions or by the application of general principles underlying the uniform law[s] as such."\(^{146}\)

In conclusion of this brief analysis, one last question must be posed. What is the practical value of the general principles or, in other words, is it possible to base a decision merely on these general principles? A ruling of the Vienna Court of Appeal in 1982\(^{147}\) seems to give a negative response to that question. On this occasion, the Court of Appeal annulled an arbitral award because the dispute had been settled *exclusively* on the basis of the "general principle of good faith." The Court of Appeal also affirmed that "it is not possible to infer concrete solutions directly from general principles."\(^{148}\)

The problem, however, is not so much whether a decision concerning a *praetor legem* gap of a convention can be based *exclusively* upon one of the Convention's general principles. In fact, given the text of Article 7(2) of the CISG, Article 4(2) of the Factoring Convention, and Article 6(2) of the Leasing Convention, where a judge is asked to solve a dispute concerning an "internal" gap, the judge *must* base the decision on the general principles, to the extent that these exist. It is not at all relevant whether the judge grounds his decision *exclusively* on the general principles. The problem instead is whether the general principles that have already been identified,\(^{149}\) and which *per definitionem* are abstract, are always useful to solve concrete

\(^{143}\) See, e.g., albeit with reference solely to Article 7(2) of the CISG, Bonell, *supra* note 70, at 25; Ferrari, *supra* note 41, at 228; Herber, *supra* note 75, at 98; Magnus, *supra* note 65, at 127.

\(^{144}\) See Herber & Czerwenka, *supra* note 68, at 51.

\(^{145}\) But see Rosenberg, *supra* note 66, at 450.

\(^{146}\) Bonell, *supra* note 18, at 83.


\(^{148}\) Id.

\(^{149}\) See *supra* text accompanying notes 65-134.
problems, a question to which the Vienna Court of Appeals gave a clearly negative response. This view cannot be shared since it is far too absolute.

Presently, the general principles are not quite so “general” so as to exclude their immediate application in order to solve concrete problems,\textsuperscript{150} a view which has recently been upheld in arbitral tribunals. In two cases brought before a single arbitrator at the Vienna Federal Chamber of Commerce,\textsuperscript{151} the arbitrator was asked to settle a dispute concerning the interest rate on a sum in arrears owed on the basis of an international sales contract governed by the CISG.\textsuperscript{152} Though Article 78 provides a general rule that the failure of a party to pay a sum of money entitles the other party to interest on the same sum,\textsuperscript{153} the CISG does not expressly determine what interest rate is applicable.\textsuperscript{154} The single arbitrator resolved the matter brought before him by affirming that the determination of a specific interest rate constitutes a \textit{praetor legem} gap. This gap is to be filled by having recourse to the CISG’s general principle of full compensation, laid down in Article 74.\textsuperscript{155} Consequently, given that it is to be presumed that the creditor operating in a commercial setting obtains bank financing for the period of pay-

\textsuperscript{150} See Magnus, supra note 56, at 490.

\textsuperscript{151} The two arbitral awards are reprinted in \textit{Recht der internationalen Wirtschaft} 590 (1995).


\textsuperscript{153} See CISG, supra note 2, art. 78. Article 78 states that “if a party fails to pay the price or any other sum that is in arrears, the other party is entitled to interest on it, without prejudice to any claim for damages recoverable under article 74.” \textit{Id.}


\textsuperscript{155} See Magnus, supra note 56, at 484-85.
ment delay, the applicable interest rate is that which is generally applied by banks located in the creditor’s country.\textsuperscript{156}

In light of what has been discussed, one can conclude that it is not possible to maintain, as did the Vienna Court of Appeals, that specific solutions cannot be drawn from general principles. However, it cannot be affirmed that general principles always lead immediately to concrete solutions, as in the two Austrian arbitral cases. Additionally, it is not necessary for a general principle to always be so concrete as to give a direct and absolute solution to particular cases in order to constitute the basis of a specific decision. This is due to the fact that where the general principle is too abstract to be applied directly, it is up to the judge to identify its specific contents so that it can be employed to fill the gaps. This task also pertains to judges who must apply general principles of domestic non-uniform law such as codes. The only difference is that in giving general principles of international uniform law conventions a definite meaning - their ultimate goal must be taken into account - that being international uniformity of the law.

\textsuperscript{156} For a comment favorable to the solution adopted in the arbitral awards mentioned in the text, see Anna Veneziano, \textit{La convenzione sulla vendita internazionale e i principi Unidroit dei contratti commerciali internazionali in due recenti lodi della Camera arbitrale della Camera di Commercio di Vienna}, \textit{Rivista dell’Arbitrato} 547 (1995).