

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Sixteenth meeting of the Plants Committee
Lima (Peru), 3-8 July 2006

Identification material

INTERACTIVE CD-ROM FOR MACROSCOPIC CITES TIMBER IDENTIFICATION

1. This document has been prepared by the German Scientific Authority.
2. Improving identification of CITES timber species is a very vital part of quality control and enforcement. Identifying timber species by eye can be difficult and is often unreliable. A microscopic identification, however, can only be done by experienced staff, and is time-consuming and costly.
3. To close this gap, an innovative digital tool for macroscopic wood identification and information retrieval (*CITESwoodID*) has been developed by the Federal Research Center for Forestry and Forest Products (BFH) on behalf of the German Scientific Authority. The system is available in English and German. It is based on the DELTA programme, which is a flexible and powerful method of recording taxonomic descriptions for computer processing and generating the identification keys.
4. *CITESwoodID* enables the user, by means of macroscopic characteristics, to identify eight of the most relevant CITES listed timbers and 41 non-CITES timbers in trade that look very similar to the CITES timbers. Macroscopic characteristics are all those which can be observed or perceived, respectively, with the naked eye and a simple hand lens.
5. *CITESwoodID* serves as a visual (photographic illustrations) and textual (descriptions) identification aid to all institutions and persons active in controlling import and export of timber species. It primarily provides a first indication as to whether a non-identified timber could be a CITES species. No special knowledge of wood and its structure is required to use the identification system, which offers a 'standard' and an 'advanced' working mode.
6. It must be made quite clear from the onset to the user that possibilities for macroscopic wood identification are much more limited than those provided by microscopic study. For this reason, primary macroscopic timber identification by *CITESwoodID* is not aimed at replacing a final microscopic identification done by wood anatomy laboratories with the appropriate equipment.
7. Following the completion of the CD-ROM, the German Scientific Authority conducted a practical course for CITES enforcement staff to train them in using the CD-ROM. Results of the course were very promising as participants in most cases succeeded in identifying species at least to the genus level. Consequently, the German Scientific Authority intends to organize at the regional level further training courses on timber species and their identification.
8. The Plants Committee is invited to provide its support for further distribution and application of the CD-ROM.