

JOINT PRESS RELEASE
ON COOPERATION TO COMBAT ILLEGAL
LOGGING AND TRADE OF SIAMESE ROSEWOOD

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[Given by Thailand] [กล่าวโดย ผอ.สมเกียรติ]

BANGKOK, 4th April: As the issue of illegal logging and trafficking of Siamese rosewood reaches critical levels, Cambodia, China, Vietnam and Thailand have all jointly agreed today that counter measures be given the highest priority. The agreement was made at the 2nd Regional Dialogue on Preventing Illegal Logging and Trade of Siamese Rosewood in Bangkok, Thailand, held from 4th to the 5th of April, 2016.

The illegal logging and trafficking of Siamese rosewood (*Dalbergia cochinchinensis*), native to the Indo-China sub region, and most commonly found in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, is causing the serious decline of these species in the wild, not to mention damage to the ecological integrity of Southeast Asian forests, increased illegal transnational crime, and burdening already resource strapped departments responsible for forest protection and law enforcement. In fact, law enforcement and some rangers have sometimes paid the price of protecting the forests from such poaching.

[Given by China]

In coming to such an agreement, the range countries have understood the importance of taking on responsibility for the protection of their natural heritage, in hopes that the species continues to survive and flourish in the future. Meanwhile, collaboration and cooperation from China is recognized as important to the success of their efforts to combat the illegal logging and trade of Siamese Rosewood in the region. Of equal importance, the countries feel, is the need to conserve biodiversity and eco-systems, both of which are essential for the well-being, food security and good health of all. It is essential, they feel, that these must be preserved at all costs, while organized criminal elements, known to be illegally exploiting natural resources, must not be allowed to profit at the expense of society.

[Given by Cambodia]

Each country presented extensive reports, accompanied by a variety of lengthy actions, clearly showing their commitment to the cause. Nevertheless, it became increasingly apparent that the complexity of illegal cutting and trading issues required the better cooperation and collaboration of all stakeholders, not least government, non-government and private sector organizations, as well as civil society. Capacity building, increased manpower and institutional support were highlighted as areas that could be improved. The countries also agreed to increase the cooperation between the relevant parties to facilitate intelligence-led investigations to help identify and interdict major criminals and, in turn, eliminate the illegal rosewood logging and trade once and for all.

[Given by Viet Nam]

Criminal legislation was also recognized as an area that could be improved, with each country primed to encourage their law enforcement agencies to adopt preventive measures whenever necessary and review any criminal legislation relating to rosewood trafficking, with the aim to impose penalties appropriate to the serious nature of these offences. The governments will also undertake awareness-raising activities to enhance the public's understanding of the serious impact of trafficking in protected Siamese Rosewood.

The agreement by these four countries is considered a step forward in the fight to combat the illegal logging and trade of protected Siamese Rosewood. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go, with much work to do, before the illegal logging and trade disappears altogether.

Cambodia : General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection, Ministry of Environment

China : CITES Management Authority of China

Thailand : Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment

Viet Nam : CITES Management Authority of Viet Nam / Yok Don National Park/ Custom Office