

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

Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022

Interpretation and implementation matters

General compliance and enforcement

TASK FORCE ON ILLEGAL TRADE IN SPECIMENS OF CITES-LISTED TREE SPECIES

1. This document has been submitted by the Standing Committee.*
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.79 and 18.80 on *Enforcement*, as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

18.79 *The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, convene a Task Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species, consisting of representatives of Parties affected by illicit trafficking in such specimens, ICCWC partner organizations, other intergovernmental organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), regional enforcement networks and other experts. The Task Force should work to develop strategies to combat illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species, including measures to promote and further strengthen regional and international cooperation. The Secretariat shall report to the Standing Committee on the implementation of this Decision and the work of the Task Force and take into consideration any recommendations made by the Standing Committee.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

18.80 *The Standing Committee shall review the Secretariat's report called for in Decision 18.79 and make recommendations as appropriate.*

Implementation of Decisions 18.79 and 18.80

3. As required by Decision 18.80, the Standing Committee reviewed document [SC74 Doc. 33.2](#) and its [Addendum](#) at its 74th meeting (SC74, Lyon, March 2022). These documents contained the reporting of the Secretariat on the [outcomes of the Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species](#), convened online in February 2022 in accordance with Decision 18.79. The outcomes of the Task Force meeting are also available as Annex 1 to this document.
4. At SC74, the Committee requested Parties to take note of the measures and activities agreed at the Task Force meeting and to fully implement the measures and activities as relevant to them. The Committee further invited Parties to review the [Revised compendium of timber identification resources](#) available in the Annex to the Addendum to document PC25 Doc. 19, and to communicate to the Secretariat any additional

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

information that could be used to further develop and update the compendium. The Committee also invited Parties to draw upon the information in the compendium to support their work.

5. The Committee requested the Secretariat to publish the outcomes of the Task Force on the CITES website and to invite the intergovernmental agencies and enforcement networks outlined in the outcome document to actively pursue the measures and activities agreed at the Task Force in the implementation of their work programmes.
6. At its 25th meeting, pursuant to Decision 18.140, the Plants Committee agreed draft decision 19.AA - 19.DD on *Identification of timber and other wood products* (see document CoP19 Doc. 44.2). In its report to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee (see addendum [SC74 Doc. 33.2 Add](#)), the Secretariat noted that some of the outcomes from the Task Force meeting could be relevant to the work of the Plants Committee as anticipated by the draft decisions on Identification of timber and other wood products agreed by the Plants Committee. The Standing Committee agreed to propose an additional subparagraph to draft decision 19.CC as follows and as presented by the Plants Committee in document CoP19 Doc. 44.2 on *Identification of timber and other wood products*:

b) consider the relevant outcomes of the online *Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species* presented in the Annex to the Addendum to document SC74 Doc. 33.2;

Proposed Decision 19.CC with the amendment proposed by the Standing Committee is presented in document CoP19 Doc. 44.2.

7. The Committee further agreed to recommend that Decisions 18.79 and 18.80 have been implemented and can be deleted.

Recommendations:

8. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
 - a) take note of the present document including the proposed amendment to draft decision 19.CC on *Identification of timber and other wood products*, as presented by the Plants Committee in document CoP19 Doc. 44,2; and
 - b) delete Decisions 18.79 and 18.80 on *Enforcement*.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat recommends that the Conference of the Parties adopt the recommendations in paragraph 8 to the present document, including the draft decisions proposed by the Secretariat in paragraph F below.
- B. As requested by the Standing Committee at its 74th meeting (SC74, Lyon, March 2022), the Secretariat published the [Outcome document of the CITES Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of listed tree species](#) on the CITES website. The document is available on the [Enforcement](#) webpage under *Documents and Notifications*.
- C. Further, in May 2022, the Secretariat wrote to the intergovernmental agencies and enforcement networks outlined in the outcome document, inviting them to actively pursue the measures and activities agreed at the Task Force in the implementation of their work programmes.
- D. Illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species continues to be a matter of great concern and the Task Force meeting outcomes provide a strong basis for Parties to take action to address this illegal trade. In this regard, the Secretariat proposes draft decisions 19.AA, 19.BB, paragraph a), and 19.CC below.
- E. At the time of writing (August 2022), the Secretariat was working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime / World Customs Organization - Container Control Programme (UNODC/WCO-CCP) to explore opportunities to provide training on physical inspection of timber shipments in regions significantly affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species. It is envisaged that such work could also include activities to encourage and support the undertaking of risk assessments to develop national risk indicators specific to this illegal trade, where not yet done. The Secretariat considers that such training and activities could make

a significant contribution to the efforts of Parties to detect and address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species. In this regard, the Secretariat proposes draft decision 19.BB, paragraph b) below.

F. The Conference of the Parties is invited to adopt the following draft decisions:

Directed to the Parties

19.AA Parties are encouraged to fully implement the measures and activities outlined in the [Outcome document of the CITES Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of listed tree species](#), as relevant to them, to prevent and combat illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species, and to report on the implementation of this Decision to the Secretariat.

Directed to the Secretariat

19.BB The Secretariat shall:

- a) seek information from Parties on their implementation of Decision 19.AA and report to the Standing Committee on the work undertaken by Parties to implement the measures and activities outlined in the *Outcome document of the CITES Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of listed tree species*; and
- b) subject to external funding, in cooperation with the UNODC / WCO Container Control Programme, work to undertake activities to provide training on physical inspection of timber shipments in regions significantly affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, as well as to, where not yet done, encourage and support the undertaking of risk assessments to develop national risk indicators specific to this illegal trade.

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.CC The Standing Committee shall consider the report and recommendations of the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 19.BB, paragraph a) and make recommendations to the Parties or the Secretariat as appropriate.

CITES Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of listed tree species

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

As required in Decision 18.79, participants in the CITES Tree Task Force meeting identified measures and activities to elaborate strategies to prevent and combat illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species¹, including measures to promote and further strengthen regional and international cooperation.

The measures and activities are listed below:

1. Improve legality and traceability and strengthen the implementation of CITES provisions regarding trade in CITES-listed tree species:

To improve legality and traceability and strengthen the implementation of CITES provisions regarding trade in CITES-listed tree species, it is agreed that it is important for:

1.1. Range states of CITES-listed tree species to:

- a) strictly implement the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 18.7 on Legal acquisition findings](#), to ensure the verification of legal origin prior to issuing any CITES export permit for listed tree species;
- b) strengthen measures to facilitate determination of legal origin, including by conducting field verifications prior to harvest;
- c) put in place measures to facilitate strict controls across the national supply chain, from place of harvest, to mills, to ports of export;
- d) where not yet done, explore the use of different technologies (e.g. satellite imaging), to ensure that logging does not occur in places where not authorized;
- e) strictly implement the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 16.7 \(Rev. CoP17\) on Non-detriment findings](#), to ensure that export permits for CITES-listed tree species are only granted when the national CITES Scientific Authority has advised that such export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species; and
- f) establish mechanisms to enhance coordination and communication between national and regional institutions with a mandate to regulate and control the harvesting of CITES-listed tree species, for example by collaborating with stakeholders developing and implementing national Timber Legality Assurance Systems and Voluntary Certification Standards and Systems.

1.2. Importing Parties to strengthen the verification of CITES documents concerning CITES-listed tree species by exercising due diligence as outlined in [Resolution Conf. 11.3 \(Rev. CoP18\) on Compliance and enforcement](#) in the clearance of such documents.

1.3. All Parties to:

- a) consider including additional information in the CITES permit (e.g. including in box 5 of the permit information such as concession details and shipment value) or appending relevant documents to the permit to improve traceability and transparency;
- b) consider in addition to security stamps, providing further layers of security to CITES permits and certificates, such as for example by incorporating two-dimensional barcodes (e.g. QR codes), a digital thumbprint, or using paper with security features for permits;
- c) where not yet done, explore automating the CITES permit processes and controls by implementing the [eCITES](#) framework for CITES-listed species, including tree species;
- d) where not yet done, implement national legislation to enable the seizure and confiscation of specimens in transit or being transhipped without a valid permit or certificate or proof of the existence thereof, as anticipated by [Resolution Conf. 9.7 \(Rev. CoP15\) on Transit and transhipment](#). Where any irregularity concerning a CITES-listed tree species shipment in transit or being transhipped is detected and taking action in accordance with national legislation is not possible, take action to immediately provide to the

¹ [Appendices I CITES and Checklist of CITES species](#)

country of destination, or other countries through which the shipment will pass and the CITES Secretariat, all relevant information on the shipment;

- e) provide regular training on timber identification techniques to frontline officers working at key border points or hubs used for trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- f) consider developing a centralized national database for 'blacklisting' of companies and individuals found to be involved in illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- g) explore mechanisms to help simplify Annotations and facilitate the correct application and interpretation of species-specific Annotations, to support legal, and prevent illegal trade;
- h) ensure that a platform to facilitate collaboration between different authorities at national level exists, and, where needed, reach out to INTERPOL for support to forge multi-agency cooperation through the convening of a National Environmental Security Seminar;
- i) ensure that any trade in CITES-listed tree species harvested before the inclusion of the species in the CITES Appendices entered into force, but not exported until after the listing has entered into force, is done in accordance with CITES provisions (e.g. such trade would require a legal acquisition finding as outlined in the provisions of [paragraph 2 in Annex 2 to Resolution Conf. 18.7](#) on *Legal acquisition findings*); and
- j) ensure the safe storage and disposal of seized and confiscated CITES listed tree specimens, and actively pursue recovering associated costs from offenders as anticipated by [paragraph 5 in Resolution Conf. 17.8](#) on *Disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species*, and the provisions of [paragraph 2 in Article VIII](#) of the Convention.

2. Strengthen regional and international collaboration to address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species:

To strengthen regional and international collaboration in addressing illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, it is agreed that it is important for:

2.1 Parties to:

- a) where not yet done, consider developing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and bi-lateral agreements to facilitate increased collaboration and information exchange to address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, including by drawing upon mechanisms such as [bilateral agreements on mutual administrative assistance in Customs matters](#);
- b) increasingly use [INTERPOL Notices](#) to share information about illegal logging and illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and the criminals involved;
- c) explore opportunities, where illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species is detected, to initiate and conduct controlled deliveries, and to engage with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) for support as may be needed;
- d) share information on seizures with Parties of origin, transit or destination as applicable, providing information associated with the seizure, for example, information on *modus operandi* and accompanying documentation and, where appropriate, the details of the offenders involved, and any other information that could assist the initiation of investigations as appropriate, in countries of origin, transit and destination or to support the development of risk profiles and the identification of high-risk routes, vessels and entities involved;
- e) include in a timely manner information on seizures of CITES-listed tree species, where possible at species level, in their CITES annual illegal trade reports submitted to the Secretariat in accordance with the reporting deadline set in [Resolution Conf. 11.17 \(Rev. CoP18\)](#) on *National reports*; and
- f) make every effort to participate in the global law enforcement operations convened by INTERPOL and the WCO to address environmental crime, and to consider initiating their own operations at national and regional levels, in particular targeting illegal logging and illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species.

2.2 Intergovernmental agencies and Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) to further expand their work in this field and invite:

- a) INTERPOL to explore opportunities to convene Regional Investigative and Analytical Case (RIACM) meetings focussing on cases involving illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- b) the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to explore opportunities to convene a Wildlife Inter Regional Enforcement (WIRE) meeting focussing on illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, to

support the sharing of best practices, foster cross-border cooperation and facilitate information and intelligence exchange;

- c) the WCO to request its Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices to undertake regional analyses concerning illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, that could be made available to Parties to support their work on addressing this illegal trade;
- d) INTERPOL, the WCO, and the UNODC/WCO Container Control Programme (CCP) to explore opportunities to initiate targeted regional or international operations focussing on combating illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- e) the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) to explore opportunities with Parties affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, to mobilize mentorships, twinning programmes or study visits, to facilitate capacity building, engagement and collaboration; and
- f) WENs to consider including in their work programmes, activities aimed specifically at addressing illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species.

3. Detection and identification of illegal consignments of CITES-listed tree species and mobilizing available tools.

To facilitate detection of illegal consignments of CITES-listed tree species, species identification, and the mobilization of available tools, it is agreed:

Regarding detection of illegal consignments of CITES-listed tree species

3.1 that it is important for Parties to:

- a) put in place effective border controls to improve verification of consignments containing CITES-listed tree species and ensure that permits are completed and validated in accordance with CITES provisions;
- b) where not yet done, undertake risk assessments to develop risk profiles specific to CITES-listed tree species, and to reach out to the WCO for support where needed;
- c) implement physical inspection best practices to strengthen detection of illegal timber consignments, for example ensuring advanced inspection of documents to detect any inconsistencies or high-risk indicators, and thorough preparation before undertaking the physical inspection ensuring that all relevant documents and sufficient information about the species in question are at hand to support quick and efficient informed decision-making during the physical inspection process; and
- d) enhance collaboration with shipping agencies to ensure legal trade provisions are respected and take strict action against shipping agencies that commit offences, such as altering bills of lading.

3.2. Parties are encouraged to:

- a) where a need to strengthen national cargo targeting systems exist, encourage national Customs Administrations to draw upon the [WCO Cargo Targeting System](#) and [WCO Customs Risk Management Compendium](#), including to target illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other wildlife crimes, and to reach out to the WCO for support in this regard as may be needed; and
- b) capacitate and provide training to frontline officers responsible for physical inspections regarding timber identification, aiming to have at least one officer available with expert knowledge concerning timber and access to equipment to facilitate such work.

3.3 to invite:

- a) the WCO and the UNODC/WCO-CCP to support authorities in countries affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, and where not yet done, to undertake risk assessments and develop national risk indicators specific to this illegal trade; and
- b) the CITES Secretariat to explore opportunities to in cooperation with the UNODC/WCO-CCP provide training on physical inspection of timber shipments in regions significantly affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species.

Regarding identification of CITES-listed tree species

3.4 Parties are encouraged to:

- a) develop, or apply existing, timber identification technologies and traceability² systems with a focus on the main CITES-listed tree species traded, to provide access to information on specimens and events in CITES-listed tree species supply chains;
- b) increasingly mobilize forensic science to address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and to make available resources for the collection and submission of samples from seized tree species to designated accredited forensic laboratories;
- c) maintain information on laboratories that can assist them with analyses in support of timber identification, for such information to be at hand when needed. Parties are further encouraged to invite any new laboratories that may come to their attention to reach out to the CITES Secretariat to apply for inclusion in the [CITES Directory of laboratories conducting wildlife forensic testing](#);
- d) facilitate the sharing of reference material (wood samples, databases) with recognized institutions, to support the development of forensic analysis techniques and reference databases in different countries, allowing for quick in-country or regional level analysis; and
- e) take note that the [United States Fish and Wildlife Service Forensics Laboratory](#), within the limits of its resources, make its services freely available to any Party to CITES for analyses of samples at its premises, and to reach out to the laboratory for support as may be needed.

3.5 to invite the CITES Secretariat to:

- a) explore the possibility of developing a field guide for timber identification including information on CITES-listed tree species most commonly found in illegal trade;
- b) issue a Notification to the Parties to gather information on mobile phone and tablet applications for CITES-listed tree species identification currently in use and their availability to different authorities;
- c) invite the Plants Committee's specialist on botanical nomenclature to consider including in the CoP19 - CoP20 workplan of the Plants Committee, matters related to nomenclature to facilitate assisting Parties and in particular enforcement authorities, in aspects relating to taxonomy and identification of specimens of CITES-listed tree species in trade.
- d) explore the possibility of establishing a directory of national experts that can be contacted at short notice to support Parties that made seizures of illegally traded CITES-listed tree species with identification.

Regarding available tools

3.6 that various tools exist to support Parties, and that Parties should draw upon available resources concerning timber shipment inspections, such as the *Best Practice Guide for Timber Shipment Inspections* developed for operational law enforcement officers by INTERPOL and the UNODC/WCO-CCP Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation (LEAP), which includes essential information on risk analysis methods, physical inspection of timber shipments, and wood identification, and draw upon the UNODC [Best Practice Guide for Forensic Timber Identification](#).

4. Addressing corruption and mobilizing investigations into illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species:

To address and mitigate corruption risks and to mobilize investigations into illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, it is agreed that it is important for:

Regarding addressing corruption

4.1 Parties to:

- a) pursue the full implementation of [Resolution Conf. 17.6](#) on *Prohibiting, preventing, detecting and countering corruption, which facilitates activities conducted in violation of the Convention*, including in the context of illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- b) undertake risk assessments to identify high corruption risk areas and to develop and implement strategies to counter corruption, including by developing corruption prevention policies, codes of conduct and ethics for staff, and whistle blower protection policies; and
- c) publicize information on arrests and prosecutions related to corruption to send a clear and deterrent message that such conduct will not be tolerated.

4.2 Parties are encouraged to:

² Traceability is the ability to access information on specimens and events in a CITES-listed species supply chain.

- a) consider establishing multi agency units consisting of vetted staff to address serious wildlife crime involving high value CITES-listed specimens, such as CITES-listed tree species;
 - b) draw upon the tools developed by the UNODC to address and mitigate corruption risks available on the [Enforcement webpage](#) on the CITES Secretariat website, such as the [Scaling Back Corruption - A Guide on Addressing Corruption for Wildlife Management Authorities](#), and take note that UNODC will soon launch a guide entitled *Rooting out Corruption*, developed to specifically address corruption driving forest loss; and
 - c) pursue enhancing collaboration between relevant governmental agencies and civil society organizations in support of the implementation of measures to prevent and combat corruption.
- 4.3 ICCWC partner agencies to continue providing support and capacity building to Parties to combat corruption, including through the implementation of corruption risk assessments, mitigation plans and the deployment of mentorship programmes.

Regarding mobilizing investigations into illicit financial flows

4.4 that it is important for Parties to:

- a) implement national legislation to combat money laundering and facilitate asset forfeiture associated with wildlife crime, and to actively implement activities to bringing together wildlife trade and money laundering expertise, including from financial intelligence units, as anticipated by the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 11.3 \(Rev. CoP18\) on Compliance and enforcement](#);
 - b) ensure that investigations and prosecutions concerning wildlife crime, including illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, also consider additional types of offenses, such as for example tax evasion; and
 - c) initiate activities to increase awareness amongst national authorities about the importance of incorporating financial investigations in investigations concerning illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other serious wildlife crimes.
- 4.5 Parties are encouraged to draw upon the tools and reports developed by the Financial Action Task Force and the Egmont Centre of FIU Excellence and Leadership (ECOFEL) and ICCWC partners available on the [Enforcement](#) and [ICCWC](#) webpages on the CITES Secretariat website, in support of strengthening their work to address illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other serious wildlife crimes.
- 4.6 ICCWC partner agencies, FATF and ECOFEL to continue providing support and capacity building to Parties to strengthen investigations into illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other serious wildlife crimes.

**TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS**

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. The Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding.

Draft decisions 19.AA, 19.BB, paragraph a) and 19.CC

Implementation of draft decision 19.AA does not have any budgetary implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees. The reporting anticipated by draft decision 19.BB, paragraph a), as well as the implementation of draft decision 19.CC would require some time from the Secretariat and Standing Committee but should be a core part of their work and accommodated within their regular work programmes.

Draft decision 19.BB, paragraph b)

Implementation of draft decision 19.BB, paragraph b) would be subject to the provision of external funds. Organizing and supervision of the work would require some time from the Secretariat but should be a core part of the Secretariat's work and accommodated within its regular work programme. The estimated external funding required is presented in the table below.

Decision	Activity	Indicative costs (USD) (excludes Programme Support Costs)	Source of funding
Draft decision 19.BB, paragraph b)	The Secretariat in cooperation with UNODC Container Control Programme to provide training on physical inspection of timber shipments in regions significantly affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and support the undertaking of risk assessments to develop national risk indicators specific to this illegal trade.	The tentative cost implications for a 5-day regional training are estimated to be USD 80,000 – 100.000 depending on the region. Total estimated costs: USD 240 000 – 300 000	Extrabudgetary