

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORATwenty-seventh meeting of the Plants Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 8 – 13 July 2024Species conservation and tradeFloraBOSWELLIA TREES (*BOSWELLIA* SPP.)

1. This document has been submitted by the Chair of the intersessional working group on *Boswellia* trees (*Boswellia* spp.), Ms. Noeleen Smyth (representative for Europe).*
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.241 and 19.242 on *Boswellia* trees (*Boswellia* spp.), as follows:

Directed to the Secretariat

19.241 *The Secretariat shall share the report in information document CoP19 Inf. 10 (Rev. 1). with the Plants Committee.*

Directed to the Plants Committee

19.242 *The Plants Committee shall:*

- a) *identify meetings or other venues that might provide opportunities to collaborate or share information regarding harvest and management of these species; and*
 - b) *review the available information submitted by the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 19.241 and the gaps in knowledge identified in document PC25 Doc. 25 on *Boswellia* trees (*Boswellia* spp.) to inform possible listing proposals for *Boswellia* species, including consideration of appropriate annotations consistent with the guidance in Resolution Conf. 11.21 (Rev. CoP19) on Use of annotations in Appendices I and II.*
3. At its 26th meeting (Geneva, June 2023), the Plants Committee considered documents [PC26 Doc. 28.1](#) (Report of the Secretariat) and [PC26 Doc. 28.2](#) on the Conservation status, trade and threats to the genus *Boswellia* (Frankincense) submitted by Switzerland.
 4. Based on these documents, the Plants Committee established an intersessional working group to address Decision 19.242 with the following mandate and membership:

Mandate: a) in accordance with Decision 19.242, paragraph a), and considering the information in document PC26 Doc. 28.2, identify meetings or other venues that might provide opportunities to collaborate or share information regarding harvest and management

* *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.*

of *Boswellia* species, and consider to propose draft decisions regarding a possible range State meeting to be organised by the Secretariat, subject to available funding;

- b) in accordance with Decision 19.242, paragraph b), review document PC26 Doc. 28.1 and its Annexes and make recommendations to inform possible listing proposals for *Boswellia* species, including consideration of appropriate annotations consistent with the guidance in Resolution Conf. 11.21 (Rev. CoP19) on *Use of annotations in Appendices I and II*; and
- c) report its recommendations to the Committee at its 27th meeting.

Membership:

Chair: representative for Europe (Ms. Smyth);

Members: representative for Africa (Mr. Balama), representative for Asia (Ms. Zeng);

Parties: China, European Union, Germany, India, Oman, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, United States of America; and

IGOs and NGOs: United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre, American Herbal Products Association, Industria Derivati Naturali, Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE), TRAFFIC, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF).

5. Subsequently, the Chair of the Plants Committee also approved the inclusion of Benin, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Yemen, Forest Trends, and the Forest Research Institute (Ghana) in this working group.

Activities of the working group:

- 6 The working group met on three separate occasions online during 2023 and 2024 (25 September 2023, 1 March 2024 & 5 April 2024).

Regarding Decision 19.242 a): identify meetings or other venues that might provide opportunities to collaborate or share information regarding harvest and management of these species:

7. TRAFFIC highlighted the opportunity to meet with industry at international trade meeting events such as the IFRA - International Fragrance Association [IFRA Global Fragrance Summit \(ifragrance.org\)](https://ifragrance.org) and IFEAT – The International Federation of Essential Oils and Aroma Trades. The USA highlighted the need to involve the Natural Gum Processing and Marketing Enterprise (NGPME) in Ethiopia, Frankincense and Gums Trading Agency in Somalia, and the Public Agency for the Marketing of Agricultural Products (PAMAP) in Oman. China also highlighted NGARA (the Network for natural gums and resins in Africa) <https://ngara.org/>. The Working group (WG) acknowledged that a dedicated in-person meeting on *Boswellia* spp. would facilitate the exchange of information, and would provide for an official platform for range States to participate. The WG recognised that a decision for an in-person meeting and funding would benefit from adoption of proposed decisions put forward by the group in the Annex to the present document.

*Regarding Decision 19.242 b): review the available information submitted by the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 19.241 and the gaps in knowledge identified in document PC25 Doc. 25 on *Boswellia* trees (*Boswellia* spp.) to inform possible listing proposals for *Boswellia* species, including consideration of appropriate annotations consistent with the guidance in Resolution Conf. 11.21 (Rev. CoP19) on Use of annotations in Appendices I and II:*

8. The CITES Secretariat provided a brief introduction and review of the work already carried out on *Boswellia* spp. in document [PC26 Doc. 28.1](#) and its [Annex](#). It was reminded that the study conducted was purely desk-based and provided general information on capacity and resources required for the identification of the species, field knowledge, production and trade in frankincense including regional trade, and species management in Range States. The Secretariat noted that identification of the species is now achievable, and raised concern on the fact that most of the trade in *Boswellia* species originates from Range States that are under trade suspensions or that are traded via countries where a trade suspension is in place.

9. The Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh updated the working group in relation to their research updates which could help inform listing proposals. Highlights of their recent research which is funded by Switzerland include:
- *Boswellia spp.* resin identification studies are expected to be completed in Spring 2024, results will be presented at PC27 in a side event, and at the International Botanical Congress in Madrid in July 2024.
 - Taxonomically *B. sacra* and *B. carteri* are the same species, and *B. microphylla* and *B. neglecta* can be distinguished; this information could be used to inform listing proposals.
 - A dedicated *Boswellia spp.* online web portal has been developed which will include all distribution information and identification keys for all species. This portal will be launched at PC27 at a side event.
 - Red List and Green Status Assessments of *Boswellia spp.* were prepared and they request expert reviewers to review the data especially those from Range States.
 - Range States were also invited to consider contributing to the proposed PC 27 side event on *Boswellia spp.*
10. Sudan informed the working group that research has started on population structure, conservation, and management of their three *Boswellia spp.* but more research is needed, including evaluating the economic potential of these species. Sudan also highlighted: the need for collaboration with the local communities to promote livelihood opportunities and set out its willingness to collaborate and share information on their three species of *Boswellia*. National legislation for resins and gums is already in place and could facilitate a CITES Appendix III listing and a dedicated HS code would help provide information on international global trade.
11. Kenya outlined that it has a Wildlife Act, a Forest Act and a Plant Protection and Varieties Act that regulate use of *Boswellia*. They also highlighted that more research funding is needed for their species and investigation into international trade in *Boswellia spp.* with data gaps that need to be filled.
12. Concerns in relation to any CITES listing were raised by India and most especially in relation to *B. serrata*.
13. Ghana outlined their ongoing survey fieldwork on *Boswellia spp.*
14. The European Union (EU) highlighted that some limited trade information is available on *Boswellia spp.* imports to the EU as *Boswellia spp.* it has been listed in Annex D of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations since 2022. This EU trade data is available on the CITES trade database.
15. The United States of America carried out a review of the documents submitted for CoP18 (2019), PC25 (2021), CoP19 (2022), and PC26 (2023), and from the work completed so far on *Boswellia spp.*, they highlighted that there appears to be a level of understanding that several *Boswellia spp.* in trade are overharvested which is compounded by intrinsic (e.g., life history traits) and extrinsic (e.g., climate change) factors. The United States also highlighted that at PC25 (2021), the Plants Committee ([PC25 SR, p. 24](#)) agreed: that harvest of many species for international trade is often not sustainable; and that several species currently traded meet the Appendix II listing criteria for inclusion. Range States could consider including *Boswellia* species in CITES Appendix III where the cooperation of other Parties is required. There are four main species in trade, *B. frereana*, *B. papyrifera*, *B. sacra* (syn. *B. carteri*), and *B. serrata*, as well as lower levels of trade in three species, *B. neglecta*, *B. ovalifoliolata* and *B. rivae*.
16. The working group, however, recognised that there had not been enough of the range States engagement in these online discussions to allow for the full appraisal to inform specific listing proposals, and that discussion on any possible annotations to accompany listing proposals were premature at this stage. A proposed dedicated in-person meeting of stakeholders on *Boswellia* trees would facilitate discussions to inform possible listing proposals with all range States in attendance.
17. The working group developed and agreed a new suite of decisions to reflect their discussions in relation the mandate set out in Decision 19.242 (a) and (b) and the recommendations directed to the Secretariat, Parties, the Plants Committee and range States can be found in the Annex to the present document.

Recommendations:

18. The Plants Committee is invited to:

- a) note that Decisions 19.241 and 19.242 have been implemented and can be deleted;
- b) consider the draft decisions contained in the Annex to the present document; and
- c) report its recommendations to the Conference of the Parties.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON *BOSWELLIA TREES* (*BOSWELLIA SPP.*)

Directed to the Secretariat

20.WW The Secretariat shall:

- a) subject to external funding, organize, in consultation with the Plants Committee, an in-person meeting of stakeholders of *Boswellia* tree species to:
 - i) exchange information among range States, exporting, transit, and importing States, and experts on *Boswellia* species in international trade;
 - ii) identify *Boswellia* species that are in international trade and evaluate whether current levels of trade are biologically sustainable ;
 - iii) evaluate whether certain species should be recommended for possible listing in the Appendices;
 - iv) identify those *Boswellia* species that would benefit from possible listing proposals;
- b) provide financial travel support to enable range States to attend the *Boswellia* meeting;
- c) participate in suitable meetings of the gums and resins industries relevant to the trade in *Boswellia* spp. (such as the IFRA - International Fragrance Association and IFEAT – International Federation of Essential Oils and Aroma Trades) to strengthen stakeholder engagement in CITES processes and ongoing efforts to improve the conservation and management of *Boswellia* spp.;
- d) liaise with the World Customs Organization to assess the possibility for designating taxon-specific HS (Harmonized System) codes for *Boswellia* spp., and
- e) compile and present the information to the Plants Committee.

Directed to range States of *Boswellia* spp.:

20.XX Range States are invited to:

- a) host the *Boswellia* meeting referred to under Decision 20.WW;
- b) make relevant information available to the *Boswellia* meeting on national population surveys, harvest, production and trade, and national legislation, and present case studies related to *Boswellia* species, as appropriate;
- c) consider including native species of *Boswellia* spp. in Appendix III, following guidance in Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev. CoP18) on *Implementation of the Convention for species in Appendix III* and Resolution Conf. 11.21 (Rev. CoP19) on *Use of annotations in Appendices I and II*; and

Directed to the Plants Committee

20.YY The Plants Committee shall:

- a) provide input to the Secretariat on the implementation of Decision 20.WW, and participate in the *Boswellia* meeting, as appropriate;
- b) review the *Boswellia* meeting outputs, formulate recommendations including whether certain species should be recommended for possible listing in the Appendices;

- c) recommend means to improve the engagement of the gums and resins industries in CITES processes; and
- d) develop recommendations for consideration of the 21st meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

Directed to Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, commercial traders, and interested stakeholders

20.ZZ Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, commercial traders, and stakeholders are encouraged to:

- a) provide funding to the Secretariat for the implementation of Decision 20.WW; and
- b) support range States in their efforts to ensure international trade of *Boswellia* spp. is biologically sustainable including efforts to gather relevant information and to include relevant taxa in the CITES Appendices.