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

Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 3-8 February 2025

Compliance

Compliance matters

MALAGASY EBONIES (*DIOSPYROS* SPP.) AND PALISANDERS AND ROSEWOODS (*DALBERGIA* SPP.)

1. This document has been submitted by Madagascar.*

2. At its 19th meeting, the Conference of the Parties (CoP19, Panama City, 2022) updated the Decision on the Malagasy populations of the genera *Diospyros* spp. (ebonies) and *Dalbergia* spp. (palisanders and rosewoods) as follows:

   Directed to Madagascar

   19.71 *Madagascar shall:*

   a) strengthen the management of all Dalbergia *spp. and* Diospyros *spp. timber stockpiles in Madagascar (including through traceability and control systems), request financial and technical assistance therefor, and submit regular updates on audited inventories and independent oversight mechanisms, for consideration and further guidance from the Standing Committee;*

   b) provide reports on progress on the implementation of paragraph a) of this Decision to the Secretariat 60 days before the 77th and 78th meetings of the Standing Committee.

3. At the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee, Madagascar reported on progress made in the implementation of Decision 19.71 directed to Madagascar and the recommendations made by the Standing Committee in the previous meeting.

4. At the end of its 77th meeting, the Standing Committee recommended reconvening the intersessional advisory group to consider and provide guidance on the measures surrounding the domestic use of stockpiles at the request of the European Union and the United States of America.

5. This document is the report of Madagascar on progress made in the implementation of this Decision 19.71 directed to Madagascar.

6. Progress made in strengthening the management of stockpiles

   Between 2019 and 2024, Madagascar benefited from a project entitled *Appui à la mise en œuvre du plan d'utilisation des stocks de bois précieux à Madagascar* (Support of the implementation of the use plan for

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* *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.*

stockpiles of precious woods in Madagascar), funded by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and co-funded by the World Bank. This pilot project was implemented by the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development through the CITES Management Authority and in cooperation with the Scientific Authority. The main objective of the project is to support Madagascar in its endeavour to enhance the value of stockpiles of seized wood currently controlled by the Government. Two specific objectives were established: (i) develop the working methodology and conduct a pilot inventory to test the implementation of Steps 1 and 2 of Phase 1. Specifically, this involves inventorying, marking, securing and sorting part of the 'officially controlled' stockpiles of precious wood in the two pilot regions (i.e., Boeny and Menabe) through an adapted marking technology and an effective traceability system; and (ii) revise the "use plan" document considering the recommendations of the Standing Committee and including the results of the new proposals and consultations of stakeholders.

Moreover, since 2023, Madagascar has benefited from a project entitled *Valorisation des données scientifiques pour la gestion durable et la gouvernance des bois précieux à Madagascar* (Use of scientific data for sustainable management and governance of precious woods in Madagascar), funded by the European Union through the RINDRA Programme (11th EDF). This project is a logical continuation from Phase 1, implemented from 2019 to 2023 and devoted mainly to the identification of species occurring in Madagascar. The main objectives are (i) making NDFs, (ii) using identification tools, (iii) establishing a traceability system, and (iv) strengthening the conservation of genetic resources.

Several activities have been implemented and achievements are currently available. The present report by Madagascar is structured into six parts that outline the achievements reached, mainly through these two projects.

7. Establishment of a timber traceability system

An important part of traceability consists of identifying wood through marking. Marking methods are expected to enable accurate identification of stockpiles of seized wood with a unique system at all stages of the supply chain, from timber to finished products. Once the wood has been marked, it will be possible to link it to all the necessary information for traceability. It is also key for marking systems not to be falsifiable.

Eleven marking techniques were examined by specialists in wood science, from the simplest to the most complex, for example: Marking with plastic tags featuring a QR code, Marking with stainless steel tags including a QR code printed locally through electrochemical marking, LiDAR 3D Scanning… Before selecting a technique, the specialists compared and analysed costs, feasibility of application to Malagasy woods, feasibility of application with the current administrative structure and reliability.

Following the various meetings and considerations, the Forest Administration of Madagascar decided to use the imported, unfalsifiable plastic label with a QR code and attach it to each piece of cut wood. This technique is accompanied by the establishment of the online data management system. The necessary materials and equipment were purchased and the management platform was developed.

The selected system and the database were tested in a real environment, in two pilot regions: Menabe and Boeny. Improvements were made, but results were conclusive. The system functions correctly and the data from these pilot regions are available on the platform https://e-voary.mg/bois. Thus, Madagascar now has a functional traceability system that is ready to be used for inventorying, marking and securing the remaining seized stockpiles.

8. Collection of samples of seized wood to analyse them in the laboratory

Wood samples were taken to identify the species in the seized stockpiles and test the reliability of the identification methods used by Malagasy laboratories. In total, about twenty wood samples per region were taken. The samples were analysed by three testing laboratories, namely: (i) the *Laboratoire des Sciences du Bois*, which works on Near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS), (ii) the *Laboratoire d'Anatomie des Plantes*, which uses wood anatomy, and (iii) the *Laboratoire de Biologie Moléculaire des Plantes* of the Department of Plant Biology and Ecology (DBEV), which uses DNA technology. A sample collection protocol was developed and tested *in situ*.

Results were conclusive: the sample collection yielded wood samples for analysis in the three laboratories, and the laboratories were able to conduct the identification. The results of two of the three laboratories

are currently available, as the analyses are underway in one laboratory. In the future, potential in-depth analyses will make it possible to identify the areas of origin of the illegally logged seized wood.

9. Results of the inventories of seized wood

The main objectives of the inventory in the two pilot regions are: (i) updating quantitative data (i.e., number and size) and qualitative data on the seized wood controlled by the forest administration, (ii) marking each specimen of seized wood and recording individual data in the designated official platform, (iii) securing the wood, and (iv) sorting the wood according to its quality (i.e., grading it) to facilitate the generation of revenue by selling it domestically.

Consequently, inventory protocols were developed by specialists in wood science and assessed and improved to reach the objectives until a final version was adopted. The resulting protocol has been field-tested in the two pilot regions: Menabe and Boeny. The inventory takes 20 to 35 days to be completed. Participants included officials from the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (departments of commercialization, control and IT), the Scientific Authority, the officials of the Regional Directorate (*Direction Régionale*), the consultant and some observers.

Results were conclusive: 4,465 wood specimens (round logs, roughly squared wood and planks) equivalent to 231 m3 of precious woods were inventoried, marked, secured and sorted into three groups according to their quality (i.e., high, medium or low). The inventories made it possible to test the whole system and build the capacity of the officials of the Ministry to conduct the work at regional and national level. The data on this wood are available on the platform https://e-voary.mg/bois of the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development. Hence, this wood is ready to move forward in the commercialization process pending the Government decision.

a) Good knowledge of the cost of inventorying, marking, securing and grading the seized wood

The analysis of information collected in the field during the making of inventories, particularly the wood handling stage, as well as the expenses related to the acquisition of equipment and consumables, revealed the cost of the inventory, which includes marking, securing and grading the wood. This information is very useful to plan the inventories to be conducted throughout Madagascar for the rest of the seized wood.

b) Update of the use plan

Following the decision of the Government of Madagascar to generate revenue from the seized wood by selling it domestically, the use plan was updated. This task was entrusted to forestry consultants specialized in this activity. The methodology consists of (i) collecting field data through surveys and interviews with stakeholders: commercial companies that use timber, civil society organizations, government officials, (ii) developing a draft improved version of the use plan after incorporating the new data obtained through the surveys as well as the various recommendations, including those of the CITES Standing Committee, (iii) submitting the new proposal to the stakeholders, and (iv) validating the final version so that it can be presented to the Government.

The final version has now been approved by all the stakeholders. The new use plan considers the absorption capacity of regional artisans, regional sawmills and large national woodworking companies. Given that their respective needs are different, the fully transparent tender procedure planned would be adapted to the regional and national context. The new plan is currently ready to be submitted to the Government for validation by the Cabinet before its effective implementation.

c) Scaling up

Once the pilot project has been implemented, Madagascar's vision is to broaden the work to the seized stockpiles in other regions and implement the system put in place. Although the technical component and the necessary human resources are available, financial resources will be needed. Therefore, close cooperation with international technical and financial partners is highly welcome. The objective for the coming years is to achieve a situation of 'zero stockpiles' of rosewood, palisanders and ebonies in Madagascar.

10. Meeting of the advisory group on Malagasy palisanders and rosewoods (*Dalbergia* spp.) and ebonies (*Diospyros* spp.)

    At SC77, the European Union and its Member States requested greater evaluation and traceability, as the control and inventory of the timber stockpiles were restricted to two areas. At the end of the meeting, the Standing Committee recommended reconvening the intersessional advisory group to consider and provide guidance on the measures regarding domestic use of the stockpiles. Madagascar has revived the group and requests a meeting in December 2024. A report of the meeting will be included as an addendum for SC78.

11. Conclusion:

    These projects, implemented with determination and commitment by the various stakeholders in Madagascar, namely the Management Authority, the Scientific Authority and the officials of the Ministry, have been a major milestone in the conservation of our forest heritage and the fight against illegal timber trafficking. Thanks to these projects, significant progress has been made, with scientific and governance aspects that are available and ready to be used for the good management of stockpiles of Malagasy precious woods.

    Stockpile management is a difficult process that requires time, human and financial resources, and caution. The proposed system based on traceability and transparency aims to limit both the size of the stockpiles and the incentive for further illegal logging.

Recommendations

12. Madagascar recommends that the Standing Committee take note of this document and of the progress mentioned.

13. Madagascar requests Parties and relevant partners, such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to provide technical and financial assistance in support of the implementation of Decision 19.71.