

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



Twenty-sixth meeting of the Plants Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 5 – 9 June 2023

Regional matters

Regional reports

OCEANIA

1. This document has been prepared by the regional representative for Oceania (Mr. Damian Wrigley). This document reports on activities undertaken in the region since the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CITES Plants Committee (Online, 2-24 June 2021). \*

General Information

- a) Representative: Damian Wrigley (Australia)
- b) Alternate: Heimuli Likiafu (Tonga)
- c) Oceania is a large and predominantly marine region with a high representation of Parties from small island nations. There are nine Parties in the region including Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. There are eight states in the region that are not currently Parties to the Convention (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, and Tuvalu) and six overseas territories that come under the jurisdiction of Australia, France, United Kingdom and the United States (Norfolk Island; French Polynesia; New Caledonia; Wallis and Futuna; Pitcairn Island and American Samoa).

Overview of major developments

2. I extend my thanks to Mr Marika Tuiwawa (Fiji) for his many years of contributing to the work of the CITES Plants Committee on behalf of Oceania as the alternate representative, and for his continued support on plant matters throughout the region.
3. I congratulate Mr Heimuli Likiafu (Tonga) for his appointment as alternate representative to the CITES Plants Committee at the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (Panama, 14-25 November 2022), who brings with him a wealth of experience in forestry management and environmental sciences.
4. During the extraordinary meeting of the Plants Committee that followed the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the members in attendance elected Dr Aurelie Flore Koumba Pambo (Gabon) for a second term as Chair and I congratulate her on her reappointment to this position. I would also like to thank my

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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.*

colleagues for nominating me to take on the role of Vice Chair of the Plants Committee, and I look forward to supporting Dr Koumba Pambo in her role as Chair during the coming intersessional period.

#### Activities of regional representatives

5. In October 2023 the region met in Samoa for a Pre-CoP meeting of the Oceania Parties. The regional representative attended and provided information and background to Parties on the Agenda items set for discussion at CoP19.
6. During the extraordinary meeting of the Plants Committee that followed the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties the member for Africa,

#### Regional cooperation and priorities

7. Australia confirmed it has made regulatory changes through legislative amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) to reflect the changes to CITES plant listings agreed at CoP19. The changes for these species came into effect on 23 February 2023. For those species where a delayed implementation was agreed; *Dipteryx* spp. and trumpet trees (*Handroanthus* spp., *Roseodendron* spp., *Tabebuia* spp.), the related Australian regulatory change to reflect their listing under CITES Appendix II will come into effect 24 months following CoP19, on 25 November 2024.
8. Vanuatu is reviewing their legislation to support the regulation of trade in CITES-listed species, including reviewing the national CITES Act to reflect the changes in the convention. It is an ongoing challenge for Vanuatu to find CITES legal experts in Vanuatu or the region to work on the legislative review on CITES.
9. COVID-19 has contributed to the overall decrease in the trade of CITES listed species in Vanuatu when it hit the country at its peak in 2022. This may be in opposition to some member countries who may have seen an increase in the trade of CITES listed species during this time. Vanuatu notes the decrease can be attributed to the Vanuatu Government restricting the movements of people travelling in and out of the country, which in turn led to the decrease in the trade of CITES listed species both locally and internationally.
10. The national workshop which was jointly run by UNCTAD and CITES Secretariat took place in the capital Port Vila from 29-30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. The objective of this meeting is to discuss around the possibility of Vanuatu putting the CITES permitting system through the ASYCUDA system in the near future. Work on this is progressing in parallel to the legislative review of the CITES Act and regulation.
11. Vanuatu was part of the CITES COP 19 held in Panama in 2022.
12. On 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2023, Vanuatu was hit by the twin cyclones of Judy and Kevin with both category 4 cyclones causing significant destruction throughout the country. Over 50,000 people have lost their homes or been directly impacted. Extensive damage has occurred to infrastructure including schools, hospitals and roads. Substantial damage was inflicted on forested areas and cultivated lands with significant implications for food security and livelihoods. It is anticipated that these concurrent impacts in the country may see an increase in pressure on native flora species for subsistence and international trade.

#### Meetings and workshops

13. In October 2022, Samoa hosted a pre-CoP meeting of Oceania Parties, providing a valuable opportunity for discussions on regional priorities in relation to the proposed agenda for the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Parties discussed the listing proposals and strategic matters related to plants, in particular the proposed resolution on CITES and Forests and the review of Resolution Conf. 16.5 on Cooperation with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.
14. Discussions during the Pre-CoP meeting identified the need for greater support for capacity building in plant matters throughout the region, in particular the identification of timber specimens in trade. Oceania Parties again expressed their recommendation that any potential future CITES Tree Species Program, and other relevant plant-related capacity building activities, be extended to include Parties in all six regions.