

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

Seventy-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 6–10 November 2023

Strategic matters

Capacity-building

CITES TREE SPECIES PROGRAMME

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.49 and 19.50 on *CITES Tree Species Programme* as follows:

Directed to the Parties

19.49 *Parties are invited to provide financial and in-kind support for a capacity-building programme that provides long-term support to Parties on their implementation of the Convention for CITES-listed tree species.*

Directed to the Secretariat, the Plants Committee and the Standing Committee

19.50 *The Secretariat shall bring to the attention of the Plants Committee relevant technical and scientific results of the CITES Tree Species Programme (CTSP) and, subject to external funding:*

- a) *develop and implement a capacity-building programme covering all relevant regions on the implementation of CITES for tree species included in the Appendices;*
 - b) *seek advice and guidance from the Plants and Standing Committees to assess the potential for the CITES Tree Species Programme to be made a permanent programme;*
 - c) *continue cooperation with organizations working on forest related matters, such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), and private economic actors to strengthen the support to Parties for implementing the Convention for listed tree species; and*
 - d) *report on the implementation of this Decision at the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
3. At CoP19, Parties were informed about the outcomes of the tree species component of the European Union (EU) project entitled *Supporting sustainable management of endangered tree species (known as the CTSP) and conservation of the African Elephant*, which ended in November 2022 (see document [CoP19 Doc.20](#) and information document [CoP19 Inf.43](#)). The EU project provided financial support to a total of 23 Parties under CTSP. The outputs of the project are available at <https://cites-tsp.org/>.
 4. After its completion, the CTSP underwent an external evaluation between November 2022 and March 2023. The evaluation aimed to determine the extent to which the CTSP had achieved its objective of enhancing the ability of participating Parties to ensure sustainable, legal, and traceable trade in timber and non-timber

products from CITES-listed tree species, in line with CITES regulations and recommendations. The key findings and conclusions from the evaluation include:

- a) The goals of the CTSP were aligned with global challenges and relevant mandates. The small-scale projects selected for funding under the CTSP were coherent with national needs and global challenges.
- b) The CTSP was also aligned with relevant CoP Decisions and, due to the focused mandate of CITES, the CTSP had the potential to be a distinctive player in the “donor market,” and an exclusive provider of specific experience and knowledge on sustainable management of threatened and endangered species.
- c) The evaluation confirmed the full achievement of seven out of nine output indicators at the level of the entire CTSP and the full achievement of most of the country-project indicators, resulting in the creation of many methodological approaches and protocols, which would serve as valuable and practical tools enabling national governments to facilitate and replicate further interventions pursuant to the sustainable management of threatened tree species.
- d) Despite limited resources, the small-scale projects under CTSP produced many tangible and intangible intermediate results. There was a strong interest and demand expressed by national governments and communities to continue and replicate the small-scale projects.
- e) Based on these findings, the evaluation recommended, *inter alia* with respect to sustainability, replication and up-scaling, that the Secretariat incorporate sustainability strategies early in project design as well as increase the visibility of results to donors, fostering networking among partners, and enhancing partner communication.
- f) The evaluation also advised maintaining dialogue with national authorities and donors for resource allocation and post-project plans, which could boost project ownership and fundraising. The Secretariat was also encouraged to sustain its donor outreach strategy to attract funding for replicating and scaling up results, given its expertise in threatened tree species.

Progress on the implementation of Decision 19.49

5. At its 26th meeting (PC26; Geneva, June 2023), the Secretariat reported to the Plants Committee on the progress made on the implementation of Decisions 19.49 and 19.50 (see document [PC26 Doc. 15](#)), and drew the attention of the Plants Committee to the relevant technical and scientific issues related to the agenda of the Plants Committee, including on non-detriment findings, identification materials and agarwood.
6. At the meeting, the Secretariat reported on the pledge of EUR 500,000 made by the European Union towards ‘bridging activities’, while continuing to search for additional sources of funds. These include capacity-building activities relating to:
 - a) consolidated regional approaches to support selected range States subject to compliance processes, in line with the CITES forest compendium Section 3, paragraph 3.1 a) and 3.2 b) on *ad hoc implementation of Article XIII and RST recommendations for African rosewood* (see Annex 1 to the [summary record of PC26](#)); and
 - b) implementation of new tree species listings, with linkages to the CITES forest compendium Section 3, paragraph 3.3 b) on *non-detriment findings for high value timber tree species*, and paragraph 3.4 relating to *Article XII and Resolution Conf. 19.4 on Materials for the identification of specimens of CITES-listed species* (see Annex 1 to the [summary record of PC26](#)).
7. The Secretariat is also exploring with other Parties funding opportunities in support of a continuation of the CTSP. As mentioned in document PC26 Doc. 15, the Secretariat issued a Notification to Parties No. 2023/111 requesting Parties to report on capacity-building activities related to CITES-listed trees undertaken with in-kind and financial support, to learn more about direct Parties’ support on CITES-listed trees not channeled through the Secretariat. The Secretariat will provide an oral report at the present meeting on outcomes of the above.

Progress on the implementation of Decision 19.50

8. At PC26, the Plants Committee requested the Secretariat to bring to the attention of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of the CITES Non-Detriment Findings (NDF) project the outputs produced under the CTSP, and their linkages and contributions to the project's relevant workstreams. The Committee further requested the in-session working group on CITES and forests to consider the information provided in document PC26 Doc. 15 when it advised the Secretariat on the draft terms of reference for the interdisciplinary study to assist decision-making processes on the future of any initiative relating to CITES and forests (contained in Annex 2 to document [PC26 Doc. 13](#))
9. The Secretariat has brought the CTSP outputs to the attention of the lead consultant preparing the draft NDF guidance for high-value timber for the international expert workshop (scheduled to take place in December 2023). The Secretariat will also bring to the attention of the co-chairs of the TAG of the CITES NDF project the request from the Plants Committee outlined in paragraph 8 above. An oral report on the outcome of the TAG meeting will be made to the present meeting, as appropriate.
10. The Secretariat furthermore considered the comments made by the Plants Committee at its 26th meeting in finalizing the terms of reference for the interdisciplinary study to assist decision-making processes on the future of any initiative relating to CITES and forests as reflected in document SC77 Doc. 21 on *CITES and forests*.
11. With regard to the potential long-term continuation of the CTSP, two factors require consideration:
 - a) Coherence: Streamlining the CTSP activities and outputs into the CITES mandates would ensure that the work under the CTSP is impactful and contribute to the Parties' priority capacity-building needs for implementing the Convention concerning CITES-listed tree species. The Plants Committee confirmed the importance of the coherence by requesting the Secretariat, as mentioned in paragraph 8 above, to ensure that the CTSP would contribute to the objectives of the NDF Project and to the implementation of Decision 19.32 on *CITES and forests*. Linking the CTSP activities to the Compliance Assistance Programme, particularly in assessing the priority areas for targeted support, may also be beneficial.
 - b) Funding: long-term and predictable funding is vital for the CTSP's long-term continuation, which may not be realistic considering the current landscape of extrabudgetary contributions. The recent successful collaboration between CITES and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the project on [Improved forest governance in the Lower Mekong Region](#) is an example of how to place CTSP-type activities in projects that focus on conservation of tree species and sustainable management of forests, as well as the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries as means for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. This requires the CTSP to be placed in a larger, cross-cutting context. Lastly, the costs of administering such a programme must be considered and financed to avoid overburdening the Secretariat.
12. Considering that the implementation of Decision 19.32 on *CITES and forests* is underway on the basis of the 'CITES forest compendium: CoP19-CoP20' agreed by the Plants Committee at PC26, the Secretariat proposes that the CTSP and any future bridging projects be considered as one of the funding mechanisms in support of a *CITES and forests* programmatic approach, referred to in Section 3 of the 'CITES forest Compendium: CoP19-CoP20' (see document SC77 Doc. 21, Annex 1). By aligning its activities with those in the CITES forest compendium at the design stage, the CTSP will strengthen its coherence with the global challenges and CITES mandates, while securing its position as the dedicated funding mechanism to address capacity-building needs for the implementation of the Convention for tree species as recommended by the external evaluation of the CTSP.

Recommendations

13. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) consider progress on the implementation of Decisions 19.49 and 19.50 contained in this document, together with document SC77 Doc. 21 on *CITES and forests*; and
 - b) recommend that the Secretariat fully align and integrate CTSP as a dedicated funding mechanism of a *CITES and forests* programmatic approach as described in paragraph 12 above.