

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

Appendices to the Convention

Annotations

INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR TRADE IN SPECIMENS OF CITES-LISTED TREE SPECIES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City 2022), the Conference of the Parties revised Decision 18.317 (Rev. CoP19) and adopted Decision 19.265 on *Information system for trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species* as follows:

Directed to the Standing Committee, in consultation with the Plants Committee

18.317 (Rev. CoP19) *The Standing Committee, in consultation with the Plants Committee, shall explore the feasibility and requirements for developing an information system, subject to agreed terms of reference, for the purpose of processing trade data associated with transactions in specimens of CITES-listed tree species authorized under the provisions of the Convention and submit any relevant recommendations to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Directed to the Secretariat

19.265 *Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall commission a study exploring the feasibility and requirements for developing an information system as proposed and provide its findings and recommendations to the Standing Committee.*

Background

3. At the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC74; Lyon, March 2022), the Secretariat reported on the implementation of Decision 18.317 in document [SC74 Doc. 82](#). The Secretariat identified some initial requirements for developing an information system for the purpose of processing data on the regulated international trade in CITES-listed species of tree species. As explained in document SC74 Doc. 82, those requirements would allow such an information system to produce a review and analysis of:
 - a) the scale of trade in listed tree species, in terms of specimens, volumes and values;
 - b) patterns and trends of such trade; and
 - c) conservation and socio-economic benefits of such trade.
4. Inputs were received from the Chair of the Standing Committee's intersessional working group on annotations, the World Resource Institute (WRI) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), and further discussions were held with the United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), UNEP, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the BioTrade Initiative of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International

Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), TRAFFIC and other potential partners on approaches for collecting and analysing trade data for specimens of CITES-listed tree species.

5. On the basis of these inputs, the Secretariat opined, in document SC74 Doc. 82, that the expected outputs of an information system could include:
 - a) an in-depth analysis of international trade in CITES-listed tree species for review by the Parties at each meeting of the CoP. If there are findings showing that the specimens covered in the annotations are not the ones that dominate the trade and the demand for the wild resource, this would be drawn to the attention of the Conference of the Parties;
 - b) a data-driven, interactive and graphic presentation of the results of this analysis, including images, charts and infographics; and
 - c) the submission and publication of a tree-species trade report to the Conference of the Parties in both digital and printed formats.
6. The Secretariat, however, underlined that monitoring trade in specimens of CITES-listed trees is a “complex undertaking” and a “moving target”.
7. Based on the primary data for international trade in tree species provided through CITES reporting obligations and the CITES permit system, there is a possibility to develop an initial analysis of the legal trade in CITES-listed tree species. However, the Secretariat noted an in-depth analysis will require the collection of additional data, most notably on specimens of CITES-listed tree species that are not covered by CITES regulations (i.e., that are excluded from the species listing owing to relevant annotations), the pricing information (monetary or financial values) of the trade transactions authorized under CITES, as well as socioeconomic information. Large-scale temporal and spatial patterns in trade in CITES-listed tree species are poorly known, especially at the global level. Whilst analyses of legal CITES trade in tree species may exist, they primarily focus on individual species and individual taxonomic groups. A comprehensive analysis of the entire trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species (whether or not covered by CITES regulations) is lacking.
8. As reflected in the [SC74 summary record](#), Parties expressed different views and concerns on several aspects of the information system but supported the renewal of the Decision on the information system scoping and the draft decision to undertake a feasibility study on such an information system, which was subsequently adopted by the CoP at its 19th meeting together with Decision 19.265.
9. Following CoP19, at the 26th meeting of the Plants Committee (PC26; Geneva, June 2023), the Secretariat reported on the implementation of Decision 19.265 in document [PC26 Doc. 38](#). The Secretariat informed the Plants Committee that it would present terms of reference (ToRs) for a study exploring the feasibility and requirements for developing an information system for trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species based on the preliminary ideas outlined in document SC74 Doc. 82. As reflected in the [PC26 summary record](#), taking into account the views and concerns expressed by its Members, the Plants Committee requested its Chair (Ms. Koumba Pambo, Africa) and Vice-Chair (Mr. Wrigley, Oceania) to coordinate the inputs of the Plants Committee on the draft terms of reference prior to their submission to the Standing Committee at its 77th meeting.
10. At the same meeting, the Secretariat recalled that it estimated the cost of the feasibility study mentioned in Decision 19.265 at USD 40,000. The Secretariat expressed its appreciation to Switzerland for pledging an initial amount of USD 10,000 for this study and encouraged potential donors to consider providing additional contributions to enable the Secretariat to undertake this study.
11. At the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC77; Geneva, November 2023), the Secretariat informed the Committee that it had developed draft ToRs for the study exploring the feasibility and requirements for developing an information system for trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species that took into account comments received from PC Members from all regions. The Secretariat further reported to the Committee that no additional contributions had been received in complement of the pledge of USD 10,000 from Switzerland for this study.
12. As reflected in the [SC77 summary record](#), the North American region supported the information system in principle but expressed concerns about the complexity and cost of developing such a system, as well as the need for additional resources for any in-depth analysis of trade in trees as this will require additional

data beyond CITES trade reports. The United States, echoed by China, encouraged the Secretariat to continue to consult the Plants Committee and Parties on progress and challenges in the development of the information system. The Standing Committee noted the Secretariat's progress in the implementation of Decision 19.265 and invited the Secretariat to report to the Plants Committee at its 27th meeting, in accordance with Decision 18.317 (Rev. CoP19).

Progress achieved in the implementation of Decisions 18.317 (Rev. CoP19) and 19.265

13. At the 27th meeting of the Plants Committee (PC27; Geneva, July 2024), the Secretariat presented an update on the implementation of Decision 19.265 in document [PC27 Doc.36](#). The Secretariat informed the Plants Committee that it had revised the draft TORs based on the comments by the Plants Committee and the Standing Committee and that additional funds had been identified to support the development of the study exploring the feasibility and requirements for developing such an information system.
14. As reflected in the PC27 [summary record](#), the representative for Central and South America and the Caribbean (Ms. Núñez Neyra) signaled that it was important to continue consultation on such a system and suggested that the CITES trade database could be strengthened as part of this process. The United States of America expressed its concerns about the complexities and the costs of such a system.

Discussion and way forward

15. The Secretariat has so far been unsuccessful in identifying an expert qualified to support the Secretariat in undertaking the study in Decision 19.265. The Secretariat notes that this study has a very large scope and requires in-depth knowledge of both CITES, global trade patterns, and trade in tree species and products – as well as socioeconomic benefits of such trade – on the one side, and information systems, database and their design on the other. Considering the technical nature of the requirements, the Secretariat will split it in different subtopics, and undertake the study in two parts: The first part of the research will focus on the identification of the data that would be necessary to create such an information system – including but limited to elements mentioned in paragraph 7 above – and ways to collect such data. The second part will build on the first part and focus on the questions of the design and housing of the information system. The Secretariat expects that proceeding in this way would provide a better view of the scope of the data collection necessary to build such a system before thinking about its design and housing, especially considering that – to be complete – the system would require the collection of data on trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species that are excluded from the species listing owing to relevant annotations.

Recommendations

16. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) take note of the updated report provided by the Secretariat on the implementation of Decision 19.265; and
 - b) agree to propose the renewal of Decision 18.317 (Rev. CoP19) and Decision 19.265 to the Conference of the Parties at its 20th meeting.