

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Plants Committee
Buenos Aires (Argentina), 17-21 March 2009

EXCHANGE OF HERBARIUM SPECIMENS

1. This document has been submitted by the Scientific Authority of Mexico, as co-chair of the intersessional working group on the exchange of herbarium specimens (PC17 WG14).

Introduction and background

2. Following the results of working group WG1 at its 17th meeting (PC17, Geneva, April 2008), the Plants Committee established an intersessional working group (PC17 WG14), co-chaired by Mexico (Patricia Dávila) and the Netherlands (Jan de Koning), to assess the current situation faced by herbaria with the international non-commercial management, donation, exchange and loan of CITES specimens, whether between scientists or scientific institutions.
3. The working group's mandate was:
 - a) *Explore the possibilities within CITES for facilitating the exchange of herbarium specimens;*
 - b) *Produce a report on these possibilities and the difficulties that may be encountered in their implementation and propose further actions for discussion at PC18.*
4. Based on this mandate, a questionnaire was drafted (see the Annex) and sent to the Parties' CITES Scientific Authorities, requiring them to forward it to institutions that exchange herbarium specimens. The goal was to find out whether these institutions were registered with CITES and knew of the procedures laid out in Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12) (*Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum and herbarium specimens*) to carry out such exchanges.

Results

5. Fifty-seven responses were received from 14 countries: 38 from the United States of America (66.7 %), five from Thailand (8.8 %), two from the Netherlands (3.5 %), two from France (3.5 %) and one from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Denmark, Mexico, Montenegro, New-Zealand, Paraguay and Puerto Rico (1.8 % each).
6. The percentage of positive replies was:

Questions	Positive replies	Percentage
1. Do you know the functions and procedures of CITES?	45	78.95 %

* 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.

2. Is your herbarium registered before the CITES Administrative Authority of your country?	24	42.11 %
3. Do you know what are the benefits of the registration before CITES?	30	52.63 %
4. Do you apply exemption of Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12)?	18	31.58 %
5. Do you have any problems for the utilization of this exemption?	10	17.54 %
6. Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the exemption system?	14	24.56 %

7. Of the herbaria that responded, close to 80 % (45) know of the role and procedure of CITES. However, only about 42 % (24) are registered, out of which 9 % (five) do not know whether they are registered or how to apply the procedure, 3.6 % (two) are waiting for a reply to their application for registration, and 1.8 % (one) was deleted from the register. On the other hand, almost 52 % (30) know of the benefits of by a CITES registration.
8. Of the 24 registered herbaria, 75 % (18) indicated they applied the exemption contained in Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12) without problems.
9. Finally, 24.6 % (14) submitted suggestions as to how to improve the system to exchange specimens.
10. The problems met and suggestions made by the herbaria are summarized below.

Problems

- CITES and its procedures are little known, as is the exemption provided for in Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12) for the exchange of specimens between institutions.
- Guidelines and regulations to exchange specimens are not clear.
- Up-to-date directories of herbaria are not always readily available, especially in developing countries.
- In some countries, the national legislation prohibits the exchange of specimens, even between CITES-registered institutions.
- Lack of will of the Management Authorities of some Latino-American countries to register institutions with the CITES Secretariat.
- Bureaucracy in the exchange of specimens.
- Lack of personnel and capacity at Customs to deal with authorized packaging and labels, which has led to various seizures.
- Herbaria registered with CITES cannot exchanged specimens with institutions that are not.
- The CITES website indicates the names of people in charge who no longer work there. The fact these pages are not updated leads some Customs to forbid the exchange when they see the name does not match that of the authorized person indicated on the website.

Suggestions made

- An easier and faster CITES registration process for institutions.
- Longer validity of the CITES herbarium register
- Clearer regulations and guidelines to carry out exchanges.
- Avoiding the names of people in charge on the CITES website and specifying titles only.
- Exempting herbaria from CITES procedures.
- The CITES Secretariat should set up a standard label system for herbarium specimens.
- Applying the exemption to centres that carry out biological studies for scientific purposes.
- Considering the problem of non-scientific and private collectors' commercial harvests.

Conclusions

11. The main difficulties met in the implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12) on the exchange of herbarium specimens are the lack of dissemination of CITES and of the Resolution, as well as the lack of clarity of the information. We therefore consider that a new exemption is unnecessary and, instead, support the dissemination and implementation of the existing one with concrete actions.
12. The Plants Committee could consider:

- Inviting the Secretariat to establish a standard label system with security measures to exchange herbarium specimens.
- The drafting of a CITES manual for the non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum and herbarium specimens.
- Conducting dissemination and capacity-building activities on the current regulations for the exchange of herbarium specimens laid out in Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12).



C O N A B I O

Dirección de Enlace y Asuntos Internacionales

OF. DEAI-183-2008

December the 3rd, 2008

"2008, Año de la Educación Física y el Deporte"

Dear CITES Scientific Authorities,

During the last meeting of the Plants Committee (PC17, Geneva 2008) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an intersessional Working Group was established (WG14, Cactaceae and Orchidaceae: herbarium specimens) to: a) Explore the possibilities within CITES for facilitating the exchange of herbarium specimens with non commercial purposes and, b) Produce a report on possible difficulties that may be encountered in the implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12) "*Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum and herbarium specimens*", and propose further actions for discussion at PC18 (Buenos Aires, 2009).

In order to know, if it is necessary to implement new ways for an efficient international exchange of herbarium specimens, Patricia Dávila (Mexico) and Jan De Koning (Netherlands) as chairman of the WG developed a questionnaire to consult herbariums (annex to this letter).

In this regard we kindly ask you to send the questionnaire to the herbariums of your country asking them to send their answer to the Scientific Authority of México who will compile all answers received at: (deai@conabio.gob.mx, or to Alejandra García-Naranjo, algarcia@conabio.gob.mx). The results of the analysis of the information obtained will be analyzed in the CITES Flora Committee during the 18th meeting that will take place in Buenos Aires in March 2009. Unfortunately that is really not too far away when you take into consideration the document deadlines (15th January 2009), therefore the deadline for receiving answers to the questionnaire will be 15th December 2008.

Thank you very much for your attention and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Hesiquio Benítez
CITES Scientific Authority of Mexico

c.c.p Jan de Koning, Chairman of the WG14 Cactaceae and Orchidaceae: Herbarium specimens
Patricia Dávila, Chairman of the WG14 Cactaceae and Orchidaceae: Herbarium specimens

COMISIÓN NACIONAL PARA EL CONOCIMIENTO Y USO DE LA BIODIVERSIDAD
LIGA PERIFÉRICO - INSURGENTES SUR 4903, PARQUES DEL PEDREGAL
TLALPAN 14010 MÉXICO D.F. TEL. 5004 - 5000, FAX 5004 - 4931

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you know the functions and procedures of CITES?	YES	NO
2. Is your herbarium registered before the CITES Administrative Authority of your country?	YES	NO
3. Do you know what are the benefits of the registration before CITES?	YES	NO
If your herbarium is registered please answer the next questions:		
4. Do you apply exemption of Resolution Conf. 11.15 (Rev. CoP12)?	YES	NO
5. Do you have any problems for the utilization of this exemption?	YES	NO
If your answer is YES, please describe it briefly		
6. Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the exemption system?	YES	NO
If your answer is YES, please describe it briefly		