

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



Twenty-fourth meeting of the Plants Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 20, 21 and 23-26 July 2018

Interpretation and implementation matters

Trade controls and traceability

Timber identification

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. With regard to timber identification, the Conference of Parties, at its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), encouraged Parties in Decision 17.166 *to expand or create and maintain scientific reference collections essential for the development of methodologies to identify CITES-listed tree species and distinguish them from look-alike species, in accordance with current best practices regarding collection, curation and facilitation of exchange of reference materials.*
3. At the same meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.167 to 17.169 on *Identification (timber)* as follows:

17.167 Directed to the Plants Committee

With respect to CITES-listed tree species, the Plants Committee shall, at its 23rd and 24th meetings:

Concerning standard nomenclature:

- a) *prioritize taxa for the adoption of new or updated standard nomenclature references, in particular where nomenclature poses a barrier to identification of CITES-listed trees in trade;*
- b) *identify the research needs and resource requirements for the production of standard nomenclature references for priority taxa;*

Concerning wood and other material as reference samples for identification purposes, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and building on information on existing initiatives previously made available to Parties:

- a) *determine, for all CITES-listed tree species, the locations and availability of existing reference samples or collections, and identify priorities in addressing gaps;*
- b) *encourage interested Parties to identify, collect and curate reference samples, and facilitate exchange to make them available, as appropriate, to research institutions, law enforcement agencies, and other authorities concerned;*

- c) *identify and compile information on best practices for the collection and curation of reference samples, identifying gaps where they exist; and*
- d) *consider how best to assist and strengthen capacities for forensic work on identification of CITES-listed tree species in trade.*

17.168 Directed to the Plants Committee

The Plants Committee shall update the Standing Committee on progress made on the implementation of Decisions 17.166-167 at the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee; and will report its findings and recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 18th meeting.

17.169 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) and other relevant stakeholders, support the implementation of Decisions 17.166-168.

Progress achieved

4. No external funding was received by the Secretariat for supporting Parties and the Plants Committee in their implementation of Decision 17.166, and Decisions 17.167-168 respectively. However, several initiatives have contributed to increasing the capacity of Parties to identify CITES-listed timber species in trade. Those of which the Secretariat is aware are briefly outlined in paragraphs 5 to 8 below.
5. At the 23rd meeting of the Plants Committee (PC23, Geneva, July 2017), the CITES Scientific Authority of Germany introduced CITESwoodID, an interactive digital key for identification of CITES-listed timber species (see document [PC23 Doc. 18.2](#)). CITESwoodID was updated in November 2017, and now includes 44 CITES-listed timber species that are highly traded, and 32 look-alike species. Training workshops for customs and enforcement officers have taken place since then, and the database is used in many countries worldwide. The database and identification key is available on CD-Rom, and online at delta-intkey.com/citesw/index.htm (might be temporarily unavailable as it is currently being updated). It is planned to develop a standalone web application in future.
6. A series of trainings on the *UNODC Best Practice Guide for Forensic Timber Identification* (https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/Guide_Timber.pdf) have been delivered by the United States Forest Service in partnership with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to enforcement audiences in Indonesia, Viet Nam and Eastern Europe. The *International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime* (ICWC) has received support from the European Union (EU) to build on this work, develop training materials, and deliver training on timber identification, which will be developed and delivered as part of the ICWC Strategic Programme.
7. Within the framework of the EU-CITES project “*Supporting sustainable management of endangered tree species and conservation of the African Elephant*”, 18 projects got earmarked for funding (see document PC24 Doc. 9.2), of which several have components relating to timber identification. These include:
 - Conservation and sustainable management of *Osyris lanceolata* for economic development in East Africa
 - Análisis integral de las especies arbóreas del género *Dalbergia* y similares a través del laboratorio forense de maderas para el fortalecimiento de la aplicación de la CITES en Guatemala
 - Sustainable Management of *Dalbergia latifolia* in Indonesia
8. Within the framework of the project *Supporting Sustainable Trade of CITES Species (2017-2018)* of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), the CITES North American Region is implementing a [timber action plan](#) that comprises, *inter alia*, an enforcement workshop (to be held in December 2018 in Mexico). Among the expected outcomes of the workshop, recommendations directed to enforcement officers and related to the identification of CITES timber species in trade stand out, in particular for species of rosewood from the genus *Dalbergia*, in addition to mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*). For further

background on this project, and in particular the Timber Action Plan, please refer to document [AC29 Doc. 12/PC23 Doc. 13](#).

Discussion

9. As indicated above, several initiatives are taking place to strengthen the capacity of Parties in identifying CITES-listed timbers in trade. These are however not in themselves focusing on maintaining or building reference collections, as called for in Decisions 17.166 to 17.169. Document [PC24 Doc. 15.1](#) (in its paragraph 11) also contains proposals on how best to assist and strengthen capacities to identify timber and wood, and enhance forensic work on the identification of CITES-listed tree species. The Secretariat concurs with these suggestions, and considers that the Plants Committee may be well placed to advise Parties on complementarities and gaps in the various tools and knowledge sources for timber identification, and on their availability and usefulness.

Recommendations

10. The Plants Committee is invited to:
 - a) take note of this report; and
 - b) taking into consideration the recommendations in document PC24 Doc. 15.1, review progress with the implementation of Decisions 17.166 to 17.169 with a view to propose revising or deleting these Decisions at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18, Colombo, 2019), or to draft new decisions on identification of CITES-listed trees and products thereof for consideration at CoP18, which may also include broader initiatives related to timber identification, as suggested in paragraph 9 above.