

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

Regional matters

Regional reports

NORTH AMERICA

1. This report, covering the period from June 2017 to April 2018 was prepared by Hesiquio Benítez Díaz, Alternate Regional Representative for North America, in collaboration with CITES Authorities of Canada, Mexico and the United States.*

2. Overview of Major Developments

2.1 Periodic Review

Mexico

a) At the last meeting of the Plants Committee (PC23; Geneva 2017), Mexico volunteered to undertake the periodic review of two species of flora listed in Appendix I: *Ariocarpus retusus* and *Ceratozamia hildae*. The Mexican Scientific Authority is consulting with potential experts and securing funding for their development.

United States of America

b) The United States will provide results of the periodic review of *Lewisia serrata* (Portulacaceae) for Committee input at the present meeting.

2.2 Non-detriment findings:

Canada

a) Canada maintains Standing NDF Reports for frequently traded species including two commonly traded Canadian plants: American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) and goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*). A review of these reports is conducted after every Conference of the Parties or when new substantive information becomes available. The Standing NDF Reports for terrestrial species and the science advice used as a basis for the NDFs for marine species are available on the Environment Canada website at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/convention-international-trade-endangered-species/non-detriment-findings.html>.

* 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.

- b) The Canadian network of CITES scientific authorities keep in regular contact to discuss Canada's interests and challenges regarding national implementation of the scientific aspects of CITES, to provide advice and comments on Canada's international activities, and to develop and revise species-specific Standing NDF Reports.

United States of America

- c) Red List Assessment of Goldenseal: Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) has been ranked Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List, according to their assessment published in November 2017 (see: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/full/44340011/0>). This medicinal plant is harvested primarily for its root and was included CITES Appendix II in 1997. Goldenseal is a slow-growing perennial plant native to the Appalachian mountains in the eastern United States and southern Canada. The Red List review was prepared by NatureServe, as the North American Plant Red List Authority, and is based on a range-wide status review, commissioned by the U.S. CITES Authority in 2012 (see: <http://explorer.natureserve.org/>). The United States uses the information from this assessment in making its non-detriment findings.

Mexico

- d) In compliance with Article IV of the Convention and Res. Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP17), during the period at hand, CONABIO has formulated a total of 231 NDFs for species of flora, covering a total of 7 Appendix II species: *Euphorbia antisyphilitica*, *Swietenia macrophylla*, *Dalbergia retusa*, *Dalbergia granadillo*, *Guaiaacum sanctum*, *Opuntia streptacantha* and *Opuntia cholla*. Of these, the majority (76%) have been on *E. antisyphilitica* (candelilla). Likewise, CONABIO has formulated a total of 122 technical opinions on the management plans to guide the sustainable harvest of *Euphorbia antisyphilitica*, *Swietenia macrophylla*, *Dalbergia retusa*, *Dalbergia granadillo* and *Guaiaacum sanctum*; where again, the great majority (96%) correspond to candelilla.

2.3 Capacity-building

Canada

- a) On April 24-26, 2018, the Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada hosted a Timber Identification Workshop at its research center in Quebec City, Quebec. The workshop focused on opportunities to apply science capacity to increase current ability to identify CITES- and non-CITES listed tree species and their geographic origins. The workshop, which included 27 participants, featured presentations from a diverse group of global experts, including from the US Forest Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Global Timber Tracking Network, the Thünen Institute, the European Forest Institute, Forest Stewardship Council International, New Mexico State University, and many others. Presentations were made on current and emerging wood identification techniques including DNA analysis, chemical imaging and DART-MS chemical fingerprints, macro- and microscopic identification of wood and fibre samples, and exploration of existing databases and collections. Approaches to economic analysis of illegal forest product trade, and ongoing international initiatives that offer opportunities for collaboration were also presented. This work reflects Canada's interest in the application and development of science to better track forest commodities in trade and, through national and international collaboration, contribute to global efforts to address illegality in forest harvesting and international forest product trade.

United States of America

- b) Through two partnerships, one with Atecma Asesores Tecnicos de Medio Ambiente (ATECMA) and another with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with funding from USAID is supporting 16 professionals from 12 countries in Central America (6), South America (1), the Caribbean (4), and Central Africa (1), to participate in the Master's Degree Program on the Management and Conservation of Species in Trade: the International Framework (aka CITES Master's Course) from April 2017 – March 2018 in Spain. The partnership with WCS further aims to strengthen country and regional-level capacity for CITES in Central America and the Caribbean by supporting the development of non-detriment findings (NDFs), improving availability of data on illegal trade in CITES-listed species, and increasing knowledge of emerging regional illegal wildlife trade threats and rapidly developing markets.

- c) In partnership with Wildlife Impact and in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Angola (MINAMB), the USFWS is supporting efforts to strengthen CITES capacity and enhance enforcement of wildlife crime law in Angola with a specific focus to counter wildlife trafficking in Maiombe National Park and surrounding areas of Cabinda Province.
- d) The US Forest Service(USFS) provided expertise to an “Illegal Logging, Land Use and Related Crimes” training workshop in Sumatra, Indonesia in November 2017. This week-long training brought together the relevant agencies and local officials, along with NGOs, to develop practices, including the possible creation of working groups or task forces, to monitor, investigate and prosecute crimes involving the destruction of forest lands. Organized and funded by Interpol, UNODC and the DOJ office, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training (OPDAT), this training provides an excellent opportunity to share expertise on illegal logging and the Lacey Act with Indonesian counterparts. A USFS expert led a session focused on best practices for forensic timber identification.
- e) Through CAFTA-DR funding and the Global Illegal Logging program, US Forest Service supported the implementation of the Xylotron wood ID device in Peru, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua through a workshop in July 2017, and follow-up trainings. These series of trainings for scientists and environmental law enforcement, involve macroscopic wood identification using traditional methods as well as use of the Xylotron machine vision tool, including preparation of samples, capture of images, and use of the Xylotron reference database. US Forest Service donated xyloscopes and laptops to partner in all four countries, as well as table saws and sanders for sample preparation in Guatemala and Peru. These partner laboratories are now supporting the development of a Central America database for timber species.
- f) DOI-ITAP: With funding from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (DOS-OSE), unless otherwise indicated, the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of International Affairs via their International Technical Assistance Program (DOI-ITAP) engaged in the following activities:
- Honduras CAFTA-DR Environmental Affairs Council Points of Contact Meeting (March 21-22, 2018). DOI-ITAP, as an implementer of CAFTA-DR environmental cooperation projects in the region, presented its 2017-2018 activities, which included results of the 7th annual Central American and Dominican Republic Wildlife Enforcement Network (CAWEN/ROAVIS) meeting and CITES capacity-building efforts in the region.
 - Honduras Regional CITES Coordination Meeting (February 19, 2018). DOI and the Regional CITES Representative (Guatemala) organized a meeting for CITES officials from Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama to share information and ideas re: CITES issues of mutual interest or concern. These officials then attended the 7th annual CAWEN/ROAVIS meeting 20-21 February 2018 (see below).
 - Honduras 7th Annual CAWEN/ROAVIS Meeting (February 20-21, 2018). DOI-ITAP, the Public Ministry of Honduras, and the Secretary of CAWEN/ROAVIS hosted the 7th annual CAWEN meeting, which focused on gathering and reporting wildlife crime data (both flora and fauna) from all relevant agencies with CITES offices taking the lead to compile and report this information. Participants included the CAWEN Points of Contact (environmental prosecutors/solicitors), 1 CITES official, and 1 police commander from Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua (POC only), and Panama, in addition to the FWS Office of Law Enforcement Attaches from Mexico and Peru.
 - Honduras Workshop to Strengthen Capacity of Prosecutors re: Wildlife and Forest Crimes (August 29-30, 2017). DOI-ITAP, in coordination with the Prosecutor’s School of Honduras and the CAWEN/ROAVIS Secretary (Prosecutor) Ms. Lorena Fernandez, hosted a 2-day national workshop in Tegucigalpa, Honduras to review and discuss wildlife and forestry laws including CITES and best practices in preparing cases for court and identifying and utilizing expert witnesses. Participants included prosecutors, national experts, investigators, and the CAWEN/ROAVIS Secretary.
 - Costa Rica CITES Training Workshop (January 21-25, 2018). At the request of the Costa Rican government, DOI-ITAP in coordination with the CITES Authority of Costa Rica, CAWEN/ROAVIS, and the CITES Secretariat organized a 4-day CITES training workshop for new and established CITES officials in Costa Rica as well as designated wildlife inspectors.

DOI-ITAP staff, regional CITES experts, and the CITES Secretariat provided in-depth instruction on CITES, including the context and goals of the Convention, implementation and enforcement considerations, and CITES Appendices.

- Costa Rica Wildlife Law and Best Practices Workshop (August 16-18, 2017). DOI-ITAP hosted a 2-day workshop in Costa Rica for prosecutors, judges, and judicial investigators to review national wildlife laws including CITES and to model best practices in preparing and presenting wildlife cases in court.
- Chile Developing a National Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking (November 28-29, 2017). The Government of Chile began exploring development of a national strategy to combat wildlife trafficking in Chile. In support of this effort, DOI-ITAP organized a workshop where representatives from countries with national strategies shared lessons learned and insights with their Chilean counterparts, including the importance of full CITES implementation and enforcement.
- Chile 2nd CITES and Counter-Wildlife Trafficking Training Workshop (May 30-31, 2017). DOI-ITAP, the National CITES Committee of Chile, the National Customs Service of Chile, and the Specialized Unit in Money Laundering, Economic Crimes and Organized Crime (ULDDECO) of the Public Ministry of Chile held a 2-day workshop in Valparaiso, Chile for over 40 Customs officials. As the relatively newly designated CITES enforcement authority under Chile's national CITES legislation, DOI-ITAP proposed this workshop to support adding CITES implementation and enforcement to the Customs skill set.
- El Salvador Wildlife and Forestry Law Workshop for Judicial Officials (November 14-16, 2017). DOI-ITAP and the CAWEN/ROAVIS representative for El Salvador along with the Judicial College of the Public Ministry of El Salvador organized a 2-day workshop to provide prosecutors and investigators with an overview of national wildlife and forestry laws including CITES requirements and laws, to discuss best practices in preparing and prosecuting cases, and to note challenges and identify solutions to strengthen coordination between prosecutors and investigators in wildlife cases.
- Panama Workshop on Wildlife Laws and Enforcement (August 2-3, 2017). DOI-ITAP coordinated a 2-day workshop with Panamanian prosecutors and investigators from the Public Ministry, technical experts from the Ministry of Environment, and regional experts regarding national wildlife laws including CITES and best practices in preparing and presenting cases.
- Guatemala Regional Capacity Building Workshop on CITES Risk Assessment Methodologies (June 27-28, 2017). DOI-ITAP in coordination with the National Council of Protected Areas of Guatemala (CONAP- CITES Authority) and OSPESCA organized a risk assessment workshop to provide officials with a tool for the developing CITES Non-detriment Findings and other government decisions. CITES and Fisheries authorities from Central America, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and a representative of the U.S. CITES Scientific Authority participated. It is intended that participants know about the methodology of ecological risk assessment. Countries brought relevant information re: fisheries and new legislation.
- Oman Inspector Training (February 10-22, 2018). DOI-ITAP supported a team of 3 FWS employees to conduct training on port of entry inspection and enforcement under CITES for the government inspection unit at Oman's primary seaport in Sohar. The team worked with a unit vetted and trained by the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to supplement UNODC training with wildlife-specific issues and inspection practices.
- Washington, DC CAFTA-DR Points of Contact Meeting + Vida Silvestre Mobile App Launch October (26-27, 2017). DOI-ITAP provided an overview of accomplishments over the past year within the framework of CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation. DOI-ITAP Washington and regional staff highlighted training (including CITES) and coordination activities and focused on the operational successes of the CAWEN/ROAVIS in the past year. DOI-ITAP launched the mobile app Vida Silvestre (Wildlife) developed with CITES officials in Central America and the Caribbean as a tool for frontline and other officials to identify wildlife species and for the public to provide "tips" to officials regarding potential wildlife trafficking or poaching violations. App web site: www.vidasilvestre.net. Download: Google Play Store - <http://bit.ly/vida-silvestre> or Apple App Store - <http://bit.ly/vida-silvestre-ios>.

Mexico

- g) At the present meeting, México will present a first draft of an “Informative guide to develop sustainable forestry management plans and technical unified documents related to the harvest of mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King) within the framework of CITES provisions”. The objective of the guide is to specify the needed technical information that Forestry Management Plans must include in order to facilitate the NDF formulation process by the Mexican Scientific Authority.
- h) In order to support the sustainable harvest of candelilla, during the period at hand the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) financed the development of 95 Technical Studies, that cover around 280,000 hectares. Likewise, CONAFOR supported 4 requests for the establishment of candelilla-wax industries in the states of Coahuila and Chihuahua; and through request for proposals under the 2017 and 2018 PRONAFOR programs, CONAFOR granted support for 7 projects to modernize the candelilla extraction equipment.
- i) Additionally, under PRONAFOR 2017-2018, CONAFOR supported 11 requests for the development of Technical Unified Documents related to the harvest of mahogany, amongst other species. Together, the approved requests cover a total of 27,607 hectares.

2.4 Other:

Mexico

- a) Operation Mother Earth II (October 1st to November 30th, 2018): Also facilitated by INTERPOL, where the Mexican Enforcement Authority (PROFEPA) developed precautionary seizures of timber from rosewood, pine, and other species; as well as birds, mammals, reptiles, orchids, and big cats (lions and tigers). Furthermore, PROFEPA did a total of 64 of wild flora in Ports, Airports, and Frontiers of the country. The information obtained was conveyed to INTERPOL, with the purpose to combat future illegal wildlife trafficking activities.

United States of America

- b) Operation Thunderstorm: During the period of May 1 – May 31, 2018, the United States participated in a global wildlife enforcement operation, organized through the auspice of the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICWC). The operation, facilitated by the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the CITES Secretariat aimed to counter wildlife trafficking in a global effort and establish a platform for information sharing between CITES and WCWG partner nations to initiate joint investigative efforts to combat transnational wildlife crime. The operation involved the participation of CITES law enforcement authorities from over 60 countries including Canada, China, the European Union, India, Mexico, Mozambique, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United States, and Zambia. This operation is a continuation of the success experienced during Operation Thunderbird, the global enforcement operation initiated in February of 2017. During Operation Thunderbird, USFWS OLE interdicted an impressive seizure of CITES protected wildlife and plant products including tortoises and reptiles, live birds, shark fins, sturgeon caviar and sturgeon extract cosmetics, dried orchids, wild American ginseng, and elephant ivory.
- c) The National Seed Strategy to address native plant needs in the United States: The National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration was developed to restore damaged ecosystems after natural disasters, invasive species encroachment, and habitat disturbances. Many native plants are not available to meet the needs of ecological restoration. To increase the availability of locally-appropriate native plants, the Strategy lays the groundwork for a nationwide network of ‘place-based’ groups of collectors to gather seed, researchers to develop seed-starting methods, farmers to grow native seed, and nurseries and seed storage facilities to supply native seed. The Strategy was produced by the group of 12 federal agencies and 360 nonfederal cooperators called the Plant Conservation Alliance. The new 2017/18 informational materials are now available (see: <https://goo.gl/Lok9M2>), and an accomplishments report documenting progress across the country will soon be made on the same website.
- d) Since its inception in 2013, the Wildlife Detector Dog program has been very successful. Currently, USFWS OLE has seven wildlife detector dog teams working in major cargo ports across the United

States. These wildlife inspector and K-9 teams have successfully interdicted an array of CITES protected wildlife products including but not limited to live animals and ginseng.

3. Activities of Regional Representatives

3.1 Dr. Adrienne Sinclair, Plants Committee Chair and Regional representative for North America serves as co-chair of the following working groups:

- AC/PC intersessional working group on the “Review of the terms of reference of the AC and PC. Co-chaired with AC Chair (Mr. Lortscher).
- AC/PC intersessional working group on Appendix-III listings. Co-chaired with AC representatives of North America (Ms. Gnam) and Oceania (Mr. Robertson), the AC alternate representative of Oceania (Mr. Makan) and the AC nomenclature specialist (Mr. van Dijk). The North American region is grateful to Ms. Gnam for taking the lead on this work.
- AC/PC intersessional working group on “Country-wide significant trade reviews). Co-chaired with AC representatives of Europe (Mr. Fleming) and North America (Ms. Gnam) and PC nomenclature specialist (Mr. McGough).

Additionally, Ms. Sinclair is member of the following Standing Committee working groups: Annotations, Captive-bred and ranched specimens, IPBES, Rules of Procedure, and Strategic Vision.

3.2 On April 7th, Ms. Camarena Osorno (Mexico) resigned from her position as alternate North American representative of the PC. In accordance with paragraph 2 n) of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP17) on Establishment of Committees, the Secretariat drew the resulting vacancy to the attention of the Standing Committee. The regional representative for that region (Ms. Carolina Cáceres) determined that Ms. Camarena Osorno should be replaced by Mr. Hesiquio Benítez Díaz from Mexico. This change was notified to Parties through [Notification 2018/052](#) on May 17th, 2018.

3.3 Mr. Benítez Díaz, PC alternate representative of North America, serves as chair of the following working groups:

- Standing Committee’s (SC) intersessional working group on “Traceability”. Co-chaired with AC Chair (Mr. Lortscher); and,
- SC intersessional working group on “Synthetic DNA”.

4. Regional cooperation

Canada/U.S.A./Mexico

4.1 The members of the North America Region communicate regularly as part of our ongoing commitment to meet and discuss regional CITES issues including CITES implementation, preparations for CITES meetings, and other CITES issues of interest to our region. In this reporting period, one meeting was held in Montreal Canada, on September 28, 2017. In between meetings, the North America Region maintains communication through conference calls and emails.

4.2 A two- year project on “*Supporting Sustainable Trade of CITES Species*” funded by the Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was initiated in 2017; representatives of CITES authorities from Canada, Mexico and the United States form part of the Steering Committee of the project. This CEC-CITES project promotes priority actions to support sustainable CITES trade for key priority species groups (sharks, tarantulas, turtles and timber). Highlights on the activities to be developed throughout 2018 regarding fauna species have been included in the AC30 Regional report, and regarding flora-relevant activities to be implemented throughout 2018 under the framework of the project, a law enforcement workshop on mahogany and rosewood will be held later this year in December (Mexico, host City to be confirmed). Furthermore, a website has been developed to explain to the public, experts and stakeholders, including local people involved in trade, the goals of the project and to report on implementation of priority actions (<http://www3.cec.org/cites/>).

5. Meetings and Workshops

Mexico

- 5.1 Project “Legal and illegal trade of wildlife between the European Union and Mexico” (2017-2018). This one-year project stems from the outcomes of the “2015 High Level Dialogue between Mexico and the European Union” and formally begun through a consultancy on February 2017. Its purpose was to: (i) analyze wildlife trade between Mexico and the EU (whether legal or illegal) during the last 10 years; (ii) identify opportunities to strengthen legal, sustainable, and traceable trade; (iii) provide benefits to the main stakeholders of the supply chain (from local communities in Mexico to the European Industry); and, (iv) contribute to tackle illegal wildlife trade. The recommendations derived from the project cover around 300 species, which for the benefit of decision making purposes, these have been clumped in five thematic groups: (i) terrestrial and semi-terrestrial species; (ii) aquatic species; (iii) flying species; (iv) timber; and (v) non-timber species. The consolidated report of the project is expected to be validated by the end of May 2018.
- 5.2 The Mexican CITES Authorities, together with the Forestry Authorities (Dirección General de Gestión Forestal y de Suelos -SEMARNAT) held a meeting on the sustainable harvest of mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King) (November 23, 2017, Chetumal, Quintana Roo, México), where amongst other aspects, a first draft of the complementary guide to harvest mahogany was discussed. This first draft will be presented by México at the present meeting.
- 5.3 Similarly, the same institutions as above held a teleconference with the purpose of achieving agreements aimed towards improving the harvest and trade management of candelilla (November 6th, 2017).

United States of America

- 5.4 The U.S. Scientific and Management Authorities hosted a 1-day meeting with the State and Tribe American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) program coordinators in July 2017 in Morgantown, West Virginia. A key outcome of the meeting was the establishment of four working groups (Biology, Enforcement, Outreach, and Regulatory), composed of representatives of the U.S. CITES Authorities, States and Tribe, designed to address specific priority issues, and to make recommendations on those issues by June 2018. The recommendations will include actions aimed at improving American ginseng outreach efforts at multiple levels, and the management and regulation of American ginseng to continue to ensure sustainable harvest and legal trade of American ginseng.
- 5.5 Prior to the American ginseng program coordination meeting, the participants attended the symposium: The Future of American Ginseng and Forest Botanicals; coordinated by the United Plant Savers (UpS), a non-governmental organization, and in collaboration with the USFWS. The Symposium showcased new research and information concerning the status and trade of American ginseng and other forest plants in trade. The Proceedings from the Symposium are available on the UpS website at:<https://www.unitedplantsavers.org/images/pdf/17-1681%20Ginseng%20Symposium%20proceedings.pdf>

6. Other issues

Mexico

- 6.1 CONABIO finalized the Project “Assessment of the conservation status of Candelilla (*Euphorbia antisyphilitica*) in harvest sites”. The Project resulted in preliminary estimates on the distribution, abundance, population structure and biomass of candelilla, as well as on the sustainable-harvest potential of candelilla in the selected sites.

Additionally, CONABIO is undertaking the development of an “Informative Guide for the development of Technical Studies for the harvest of candelilla”, which aims to provide guidelines to the forestry technicians that support the sustainable harvest of this species.

The second phase of the Project led by CONABIO on the “Diagnosis of the populations and other relevant aspects of *Dalbergia granadillo* Pitter. and *D. stevensonii* Standl” is underway. Its objective is to generate relevant information on both species, in order to generate (inter alia) information that will support decision making processes related to NDFs.

During the reporting period at hand, the Mexican Law Enforcement Authority (PROFEPA) developed a total of 5,113 verification operations of wildlife transboundary movements; of these, 3,618 represented imports, and the remaining 1,495 represented exports.