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

Twenty-fifth meeting of the Plants Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 17 and 20-23 July 2020

Species specific matters

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN THE AFRICAN *PTEROCARPUS* ROSEWOOD SPECIES

1. This document has been submitted by the European Union and developed in consultation with its Member States.[*]

2 The purpose of this document is to contribute to the implementation of the following Decisions:

   a) Decision 17.302 f) on *African tree species* addressed to the Plants Committee, and the establishment of an intersessional working group as recommended in document PC25 Doc. 28;

   b) Decision 18.92, paragraph b), and the assessment under agenda item PC25 Doc. 15.5 on *Inclusion of* Pterocarpus erinaceus *from all range States in the Review of Significant Trade*; and

   c) Decision 18.236, the intersessional working group as recommended in document *Rosewood tree species [Leguminosae (Fabaceae)]*.

Background

3. This document provides background information for consideration of possible inclusion of all African species of the genus *Pterocarpus*[1] in Appendix II of CITES.

4. Globally, legal and illegal trade in precious timber has been increasing during the last decades, which led to the inclusion of several taxa in CITES Appendix II (Lavorgna et al., 2018). An emblematic example are the rosewood species. Rosewood is a commercial term encompassing hardwood species, including the genus *Pterocarpus,* harvested to produce the traditional “Hongmu furniture” in Asia. Rosewood trade is characterized by a shifting supply between different countries and species (Winfield et al., 2016). The stock depletion of Asia’s Hongmu species as well as stricter conservation measures and enforcement of logging regulations has resulted in a shift towards alternative species of the Fabaceae family in Latin America and Africa sharing similar characteristics particularly within the *Pterocarpus* genus (Treanor, 2015; EIA, 2016). In the meantime African rosewood comprises nearly half of the Hongmu production (Treanor, 2015).

5. African *Pterocarpus* species produce rosewood (e.g. *P. erinaceus* and *P. tinctorius*) or other precious hardwoods (e.g. *P. angolensis*).

---

[*] *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.*

[1] *With the exception of* P. erinaceus *and* P. tinctorius *which have already been included in CITES Appendix II at COP17 resp. CoP18.*

6. As Document CoP17 Inf. 48 on the "Global status of *Dalbergia* and *Pterocarpus* rosewood producing species in trade (submitted by Senegal)" had been drafted four years ago in 2016, excellent information is available which may warrant some update of the current global status of African *Pterocarpus* populations.

7. There is limited information about the current range and distribution of many *Pterocarpus* species, and there do not appear to be many taxonomic references or studies of *Pterocarpus* in Africa. Most of the species in Africa were assessed by the IUCN Red List almost 20 years ago, and these assessments need to be updated. The next CITES RST-document would already include an updated account of the conservation status of *P. erinaceus* throughout all range States. Regarding the remaining species of the genus, assessments that are expected to be finalized by 2020 under the GTA of IUCN can be read at the following the webpage https://www.bgci.org/our-work/projects-and-case-studies/global-tree-assessment/.

8. It is clear that tree species that produce precious woods in Africa are threatened by a variety of activities, including domestic and international trade, related illegal logging, deforestation, climate change induced aridification, and encroachment of peri-urbanization. While the majority of range States in Africa do appear to have legislation in place requiring good management of forests, all range States have been losing substantial levels of forest cover over the last 15-25 years. In some countries, this rate of deforestation has rapidly increased over the last few years, which is alarming (Doc. CoP17 Inf. 48, p 178).

9. African *Pterocarpus* are a taxonomically complex group and there is much uncertainty surrounding their identification. Reliable identification of species within groups such as these remains one of the most difficult challenges in ensuring the sustainability of international timber trade. Furthermore, multiple African *Pterocarpus* species are traditionally traded under the same trade names.

10. *P. erinaceus,* and possibly *P. tinctorius*, are still subject to illegal logging and trade, notably because existing exports are mislabelled as other non-CITES species of the genus. It is considered that this vulnerability could be more efficiently addressed by listing all African species of the genus *Pterocarpus* in the CITES Appendices.

11. When specimens of a species, in the form in which they are traded, resemble specimens of a species included in Appendix II or I, there are existing provisions to include that species in Appendix II within Annex 2b of Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on the criteria for inclusion of species in Appendix II.

Conclusion

12. Currently, two African *Pterocarpus* species (*P. erinaceus* and *P. tinctorius*) are listed in CITES Appendix II. However, to maximize the conservation benefit of CITES and to avoid timber laundering through mislabeling, it is important to ensure that all measures applicable to those two species are also applied to their look-alike species of the genus *Pterocarpus* spp. (Some of these look-alike species may also meet the listing criteria under Article II, paragraph 2 (a) of the Convention). Rather than monitoring log exports for a single species, log/sawn wood export monitoring should be carried out for all look-alike species, with customs authorities having a good understanding of which species occur naturally in their countries. Until suitable timber identification measures that allow differentiation between species become available, the only feasible way to mitigate misidentification risks is to collectively manage those species. This is precautionary and commensurate with the risks posed by serial depletion and deliberate misreporting.

13. The listing will help customs authorities, in exporting as well as in importing countries, to enforce CITES regulation. This enforcement will target the former listed CITES rosewood species as well as these newly proposed taxa for listing.

Recommendations to the Plants Committee

14. In the application of Decision 17.302, the Plants Committee is invited to:

    a) consider the information provided in this document;

    b) should an intersessional working group on African tree species be established as per document PC25 Doc. 28, agree for it to include within its priorities the assessment of available scientific, technical and more specifically taxonomic aspects regarding the African species in the genus *Pterocarpus* that are affected by the international commercial pressure on rosewood timber under Appendix II;

c) should an intersessional working group on *Rosewood tree species [Leguminosae (Fabaceae)]* be established as per document PC25 Doc. 26.1, agree for it to consider, as appropriate, the findings of the present document in preparation for the study and the international workshop called for, under paragraphs a) and b) of Decision 18.234;

d) invite the Nomenclature specialist to assess the nomenclatural issues regarding those African species in the genus *Pterocarpus*.

References

Lavorgna A., Rutherford C., Vaglica V., Smith M. J. and Sajeva M. 2018. CITES, wild plants, and opportunities for crime. Eur. J. Crim. Policy Res. 24: 269-288.

Winfield K., Scott M. and Grayson C. 2016. Global Status of Dalbergia and Pterocarpus Rosewood Producing Species in Trade. In: GlobalEye (ed.), Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. CITES, Johannesburg.

Treanor N. B. 2015. China's Hongmu Consumption Boom: Analysis of the Chinese Rosewood Trade and Links to Illegal Activity in Tropical Forested Countries. Forest Trends.

Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA). 2016. The Hongmu Challenge: A briefing for the 66th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, January 2016. EIA, London.