

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

Regional matters

Regional reports

OCEANIA

1. This document has been prepared by regional representative for Oceania (Mr Damian Wrigley, Australia).<sup>\*</sup> This document reports on activities undertaken in the Region since the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Geneva, 17 – 28 August 2019).

General information

- a) Representative: Damian Wrigley (Australia).
- b) Alternate: Marika Tuiwawa (Fiji)
- c) There are nine Parties in the region: (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu). There are eight states in the region that are not Parties to the Convention (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, and Tuvalu) and six overseas territories that come under the jurisdiction of Australia, France, United Kingdom and the United States (Norfolk Island; French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna; Pitcairn Island and American Samoa).

Overview of major developments

2. I extend my gratitude towards Dr Greg Leach, former Oceania Representative to the Plants Committee, for his many years of expert representation to the Plants Committee on behalf of the Parties of Oceania. I thank Dr Leach for his assistance in preparing me for this role and wish him well in his future endeavours.
3. Immediately following the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties the Plants Committee held an extraordinary meeting to elect a new Chair and Deputy Chair of the Plants Committee. I congratulate Dr Aurélie Flore KOUMBA PAMBO (Gabon) who was elected as Chair and Dr Rosemary Gnam (United States of America) who was elected as Deputy Chair. I wish you both well in your leadership of the Plants Committee.
4. Australia has confirmed the following regulatory changes in relation to CITES listed timber species through legislative amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999):

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<sup>\*</sup> *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.*

- a) *Dalbergia* and *Gibourtia* (rosewoods) – On 26 November 2019, the regulation of the import and export of finished items of musical instruments made from *Dalbergia* and *Gibourtia*, up to a total weight of 10kg per shipment.
  - b) On 26 November 2019 new regulations were added to existing regulations for *Pericopsis elata* (African Teak). These new legislative amendments include specimens of the species in the form of plywood and transformed wood.
  - c) Australia has made public notifications of the forthcoming Appendix II listing of specimens of *Cedrela* spp. (Cedar) from Neotropical populations to take effect from 28 August 2020 in the form of logs, sawn wood, veneer sheets and plywood containing *Cedrela* spp. It is anticipated that this communication along with other CITES listed timber species will provide industry, importers and exporters with sufficient time to adapt to these changes.
5. New Zealand has confirmed the amendment of its Trade in Endangered Species Act (which implements CITES) to reflect the changes to the CITES species listings agreed at COP18, including for specimens of *Dalbergia* and *Gibourtia*. The changes for these species came into effect on 9 January 2020. These amendments are now being implemented and advice was circulated to interested parties including the music industry.
  6. Tonga is establishing a process for legislation development; Samoa is finalising draft legislation and Vanuatu is reviewing their legislation to support the regulation of trade in CITES-listed species.
  7. During April 2020, Cyclone Harold, impacted Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga. Cyclone Harold ranged from a tropical storm through to a Category 5 cyclone causing significant destruction throughout the region. Dozens of lives were lost in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji with over 300,000 people having lost their homes or been directly impacted in the region. Extensive damage has occurred to infrastructure including schools, hospitals and tens of thousands of homes. Substantial damage was inflicted on forested areas and cultivated lands with significant implications for food security and livelihoods. The ongoing global implications of COVID-19 has seen a dramatic reduction in tourism, a major contributor to livelihoods in the region. It is anticipated that these concurrent impacts on the region may see an increase in pressure on native flora species for subsistence and trade.
  8. COVID-19 continues to be a concern for the region, noting that cases remain significantly lower than other parts of the world. The region was saddened to hear of the passing of Dr Art Whistler on 2 April 2020 due to complications from contracting COVID-19. Dr Whistler was a world-renowned botanist who contributed greatly to the region's botanical knowledge, developing the capacity of students and communities throughout the Pacific. Dr Whistler's significant contribution to the region will be remembered for many years to come through his numerous publications on the region's tropical flora.

#### Activities of regional representatives

9. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties I have liaised with Parties in the region on the potential seizure of plant specimens and considerations for the impact of COVID-19. In Australia, the bushfires of 2019/2020 have had a devastating impact across millions of hectares of the continent with significant implications for some threatened species.
10. The Australasian Seed Science Conference was scheduled for 5-9 April 2020 with the intention of bringing international seed scientists and practitioners to Australia to discuss advances in the collection and storage of seed. The conference included capacity building on the long-term ex situ storage of non-orthodox seed, such as the many tropical species found throughout the region. The postponed conference will occur in September 2021 and will again aim to include delegates from across the region to support the ex situ conservation of native species such as those that may become the subject of future trade.

#### Regional cooperation and priorities

11. Australia and New Zealand continue to provide support to Parties in the region on capacity building measures such as the identification of suitable permitting infrastructure, e.g. e-CITES, as well as the sharing of templates by New Zealand to support Parties in the region to develop non-detriment findings.

## Meetings and workshops

12. On 25-27 March 2019 I attended a pre-CoP meeting of Oceania Parties in Samoa to discuss regional priorities and matters of concern in regard to CITES listed species. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss plant matters with Parties in the lead-up to the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The availability of data and the resourcing allocated to the management of CITES-related plant matters is limited for many Parties throughout the region so it was a good opportunity to develop a better understanding of the specific challenges facing the region in regards to implementing CITES for plant specimens. The assistance of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) was fundamental to the meetings success and I thank SPREP for hosting the meeting of Oceania Parties.
13. Australia and Samoa (Dr Art Whistler) have participated in IUCN Red Listing assessments with Botanic Gardens Conservation International. This work is ongoing and will provide a better understanding of the threats facing the region's flora, including consideration of the impacts of international trade.