

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



Fifty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 2-6 October 2006

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

Timber trade

RAMIN

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Control of trade in ramin

2. At its 50th meeting (Geneva, March 2004), the Standing Committee noted the concerns that were expressed regarding illegal trade in *Gonystylus* spp. and requested the Secretariat to prepare a document on this subject for discussion at its following meeting.
3. At the 51st meeting of the Standing Committee (Bangkok, October 2004), the Secretariat reported on actions taken by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore to address illegal trade. The Committee agreed to invite the Parties concerned to report at its 53rd and subsequent meetings as well as at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on progress achieved on this matter.
4. At the 53rd meeting (Geneva, June – July 2005), the representative of Asia (Malaysia) gave an oral progress report on the Tri-National Task Force on Ramin. The Committee requested that China, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America report on this issue at its future meetings.
5. The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) funded a four-day workshop entitled 'ITTO Expert Meeting on the Effective Implementation of the Inclusion of Ramin (*Gonystylus* spp.) in Appendix II of CITES' held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in May 2006. Around 50 participants from range States of *Gonystylus* spp., importing countries, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and the industry participated in this meeting. Discussions addressed problems concerning the effective implementation of the provisions related to trade in Appendix-II species, conservation priorities were established and actions to achieve sustainable trade in ramin were agreed. The meeting report is not yet available but will soon be published on the ITTO website.
6. The CITES Secretariat would like to thank ITTO for providing the funds to organize this meeting, as well as the Malaysian Government, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and TRAFFIC Southeast Asia for providing support and hosting event.
7. In line with the decision taken by the Committee at its previous meeting, the Secretariat suggests that China, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States be invited to report their achievements and further problems identified in the course of the past year, with the control of trade in ramin.

## Recommendation

8. The Secretariat recommends that, on the basis of these oral reports, the Committee decide on any further action and whether this item still needs to be included in the agenda of Committee meetings.

## Status of ramin (*Gonystylus bancanus*) in Sarawak Malaysia

9. Whilst preparing with ITTO a joint timber species grant application to the European Union, the following research report was brought to the Secretariat's attention: Van der Meer P.J., Chai Yan Chiew F., Hillegers P.J.M., Manggil P. (2005). *Sustainable Management of Peat Swamp Forests of Sarawak with special reference to Ramin (Gonystylus bancanus)*. Alterra, Wageningen UR, the Netherlands; Forest Department Sarawak, Malaysia; Sarawak Forestry Corporation, Malaysia. 39 pp.
10. The Ministry of Primary Industries of Malaysia and the Ministry for Foreign Trade of the Netherlands established a Joint Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management (JWG) in 1993. The JWG contributes input on the international issue of sustainable forest management. Within the framework of the JWG, the two countries decided to execute bilateral projects aiming at conservation and sustainable management of the Malaysian forests. In April 1996 Sarawak proposed two projects for funding under the JWG and on 10 November 2000, both Governments officially agreed to implement the Ramin Project [*Sustainable Management of Peat Swamp Forest with Special Reference to Ramin (Gonystylus bancanus)*]. The project focused on issues related to the sustainable management of the peat swamp forests (PSF) of Sarawak. The Project was funded and implemented by the two countries from 2001 to 2004, with a donation of RM 1,249,608 from Malaysia (Sarawak Forest Department, in kind and cash) and EUR 934,998 from the Netherlands (Alterra, Wageningen UR).
11. The conclusions of the report are disturbing and bring into question the sustainability of Malaysia's continuing harvesting programme for ramin in Sarawak and its continued international trade under CITES. The study found that:
  - a) There are no representative areas of virgin peat swamp forest for the preservation of the original flora and fauna biodiversity for future reference;
  - b) Large areas of peat swamp forest are possibly in a state beyond regeneration capacity, and the valuable ramin timber, for which there is still a strong demand, is now largely depleted; and
  - c) Threats to peat swamp forest areas due to agro-conversion and conversion to other land uses are real and pressing.
12. Specifically, the report recommends the following:
  - a) Logging in the peat swamp forest should be phased out and no re-logging of the logged forest should be permitted.
  - b) Studies of tree growth in the past as well as in this project indicated that populations of shade-tolerant species like ramin require a much longer rotation or felling cycle than 45 years to sustain themselves. Therefore all remaining peat swamp forest areas in Sarawak's Permanent Forest Estate should be conserved and logging of the mixed swamp forest should be suspended for one cutting cycle (45 years – the current cutting cycle for mixed swamp forests). This means resuming harvesting only in 90 years' time so that the forest can regenerate and recover during the suspension period. It is also concluded that the current number of seed trees, particularly of ramin, is insufficient for the regeneration of the mixed swamp forest.
  - c) Implementation of sustainable forest management practices for the remaining peat swamp forest areas is recommended in order to sustain the economic benefits and ecological significance of the peat swamp forest in the long term.
  - d) In Sarawak, the logged peat swamp forest has never been considered for a rehabilitation programme nor has there ever been a ramin reforestation project. Ramin has the potential to become a successful plantation. Restoration of the severely disturbed forest, especially that with ramin, may provide opportunities for the local communities, for the private forestry sector and

for the state and federal government. Restoration will only be possible with the involvement of the local communities that would provide both ownership and job opportunities.

- e) Following the recent (January 2005) listing of ramin in CITES Appendix II the pros and cons of listing ramin as an Appendix I species should be investigated. Such a change in classification should result in a moratorium on ramin harvesting and provide opportunities for research into the perpetuation of the species.

#### Recommendations

13. The Secretariat is concerned that Malaysia, although a party to this study and a co-author of the report, continues to allow harvesting of ramin in Sarawak in spite of the recommendations made in the report. In fact, Malaysia has communicated to the Secretariat a quota for 2006 to export 22,000 m<sup>3</sup> of ramin from Sarawak. The Secretariat has brought this matter to the attention of Malaysia and requested information on how non-detriment findings were made for the exports from Sarawak this year.
14. On the basis of the reply received from Malaysia, the Secretariat will consider whether it will make recommendations for action to the Standing Committee. The Secretariat will report orally on this matter at the present meeting.