

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



Seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Rosa Khutor, Sochi (Russian Federation), 1-5 October 2018

Interpretation and implementation matters

Trade control and traceability

Identification of specimens in trade

IDENTIFICATION OF CITES-LISTED TREE SPECIES:  
REPORT OF THE PLANTS COMMITTEE

1. This document has been submitted by the Chair of the Plants Committee.\*
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions related to timber identification:

**17.166 Directed to Parties**

*Parties are encouraged 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.*

**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;*

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\* *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) *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.*

3. At its 23rd meeting (PC23, Geneva, 2017), the Plants Committee considered two documents related to timber identification: PC23 Doc 18.1, submitted by the Chair of the Plants Committee on the implementation of Decision 17.166 to 17.169; and PC23 Doc. 18.2, submitted by Germany, on the adaptation of the macroscopical identification tool CITESwoodID to CoP17 timber listings.
4. In order to address its mandate in Decision 17.167, the Plants Committee established an intersessional working group, which met for the first time during PC23. The Plants Committee adopted its initial recommendations concerning a realistic work plan of intersessional activities to implement Decision 17.167 [see document [PC23 Com. 7 \(Rev. by Sec.\)](#)]. The membership of the intersessional working group was decided as follows:

Co-chairs: the representative of Central and South America and the Caribbean (Ms. Rauber Coradin) and Canada;

Members: the representatives of Africa (Mr. Mahamane and Ms. Koumba Pambo) and the acting representative of Europe (Ms. Moser);

Parties: Austria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Estonia, European Union, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America; and

IGOs and NGOs: UNEP-WCMC, Chambre Syndicale de la Factice Instrumentale (CSFI), Forest Based Solutions, LLC, International Wood

#### Progress in the implementation of Decisions 17.166, 17.167 and 17.168

5. At its 24th meeting (PC24, Geneva, 2018), the Plants Committee considered the report of the intersessional working group in document PC24 Doc. 15.1, which included a comprehensive overview of issues relating to standard nomenclatures, wood and other material as reference samples for identification purposes, and recommendations derived from these findings. Furthermore, the Secretariat reported in document PC23 Doc. 15.2 that no external funding had been secured for assisting the implementation of Decisions 17.166 to 16.168; yet it provided an overview of other activities that though are not in themselves focused in maintaining or building reference collections, represented initiatives that strengthen the capacity of Parties in identifying CITES-listed timber in trade. During consideration of these items, the acting representative of North America (Mr. Benítez Díaz) proposed revisions to the draft decisions presented in PC23 Doc. 15.1.

6. Following discussions in plenary of both documents, the Plants Committee established an in-session working group and, based on its proposals, adopted the following recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 18th meeting [see document PC24 Com. 3 (Rev. by Sec.)]:

- a) Delete Decision 17.166, noting that the focus of this decision is a long-term instruction to Parties and its direction would better be placed in Resolution Conf. 10.13 (Rev. CoP15) on *Implementation of the Convention for timber species*.
- b) Replace Decisions 17.167 to 17.169 with the following new draft decisions:

**18.AA Directed to the Plants Committee**

The Plants Committee shall, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and building on information on existing initiatives:

- a) determine gaps and complementarities in various tools and knowledge sources for timber identification, such as existing field identification guidelines and keys, and on their availability and usefulness;
- b) develop standardized information templates and other tools that could be used by Parties to facilitate sharing information on the content and status of wood sample collections, and exchange with research institutions, law enforcement agencies, and other authorities;
- c) assist Parties to identify existing laboratory services for the identification of timber and wood products and to strengthen screening and forensic capacity to identify CITES-listed tree species in trade;
- d) determine methods to stimulate global, regional and national exchange of best practices in wood identification technologies between Parties; and
- e) update the Standing Committee on progress made on the implementation of Decisions 18.AA-CC; and report its findings and recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.

**18.BB Directed to Parties**

Parties are encouraged to collaborate with the Plants Committee, with relevant stakeholders and with existing initiatives in the implementation of Decision 18.AA, by:

- a) working with institutions having wood identification expertise, share information related to timber identification methods, tools and protocols for enforcement and customs officers;
- b) identifying existing laboratory services for the identification of timber and wood products, and strengthening screening and forensic capacity to identify CITES-listed tree species in trade;
- c) identifying effective wood identification training methods, tools and protocols for enforcement and customs officers;
- d) prioritizing the species of rosewoods and palisanders that would most benefit from the development of timber identification tools, protocols and materials; and
- e) reporting information on existing laboratories, effective wood identification training methods, tools and protocols for enforcement and customs officers, and the priority species of rosewoods and palisanders to the Secretariat

**18.CC Directed to the Secretariat**

The Secretariat shall:

- a) liaise with organizations having relevant expertise on timber identification, including the Global Timber Tracking Network (GTTN), International Association of Wood Anatomists (IAWA), International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Thünen Centre of Competence on the

Origin of Timber, European Forest Institute (EFI), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and World Resources Institute to identify shared priorities, in consultation with the Plants Committee, including priority species, emerging techniques, standardized procedures, and collection and sharing of wood samples applicable to timber tracking tools;

- b) make the currently available guidance on wood identification accessible to Parties on a dedicated webpage of the CITES website;
- c) and report to the Plants Committee progress and updates of the paragraph supra.

#### Recommendations

7. The Standing Committee is invited to take note of the progress made by the Plants Committee in its implementation of Decisions 17.166 and 17.167, and of the findings and recommendations that the Plants Committee intends to report for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 18th meeting.