

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

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Twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Santiago (Chile), 3-15 November 2002

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation issues

CONSERVATION OF *SWIETENIA MACROPHYLLA*: REPORT OF THE MAHOGANY WORKING GROUP

1. This document has been prepared by the CITES Secretariat
2. Decision 11.4, Regarding conservation of *Swietenia macrophylla* contains the following instructions:
  - a) *The Parties agree to establish a Swietenia macrophylla (bigleaf mahogany) Working Group. This Working Group should report to the Conference of the Parties at its 12th meeting.*
  - b) *This Working Group shall include all range States for Swietenia macrophylla, principal importing countries and a representative to be designated by the Plants Committee.*
  - c) *The Mahogany Working Group shall:*
    - i) *review the effectiveness of current and potential Appendix-III listings;*
    - ii) *analyse legal and illegal trade;*
    - iii) *review studies of the status of the species;*
    - iv) *encourage the exchange of information by CITES Management and Scientific Authorities on the implementation of the Convention and import/export controls;*
    - v) *study appropriate measures to widen the geographic scope of Appendix-III listings;*
    - vi) *assess and analyse the results of the action specified in paragraphs i) to v) above; and*
    - vii) *present a report on its findings as well as its recommendations for consideration at the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
  - d) *The Secretariat shall convene a meeting of the Mahogany Working Group within one year after the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to meet with experts in the species including: representatives from relevant multilateral organizations such as ITTO, IFF, UNFF, and FAO as well as IUCN, TRAFFIC; and other relevant technical experts as appropriate.*
  - e) *The fulfilment of these Terms of Reference and the convening of any meetings of the Mahogany Working Group shall be dependent on the availability of funding. Interested donor agencies and conservation and trade organizations are encouraged to provide funding to facilitate this effort.*

3. The Secretariat consulted the range States concerned, and two countries, Bolivia and Colombia, agreed to host the meeting. In consultation with Colombia it was agreed to hold the meeting in Bolivia, since this country is an important trader in mahogany. The Secretariat is grateful to both countries for their willingness to host this important meeting.
4. The meeting was held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, from 3 to 5 October 2001. Financial support from the United States of America and the United Kingdom made it possible to sponsor two delegates from most of the range States of *Swietenia macrophylla*. Unfortunately some were not able to travel to Bolivia, because of frequent and last minute changes in the international flight schedules of many air companies.
5. Participating range States were: Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela. Only El Salvador did not respond to the invitation from the Secretariat to attend the meeting.
6. Argentina, the United Kingdom and the United States of America were invited as being the major importers of mahogany wood.
7. Invitations were further sent to the following interested organizations: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), International Wood Products Association (IWPA), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).
8. Conservation International (United States of America) was invited to give a presentation on the population status of *Swietenia macrophylla*.
9. TRAFFIC South America prepared, under contract to the Secretariat, a report on CITES Appendix-III implementation for *Swietenia macrophylla*.
10. The representative of the Plants Committee was unable to participate in the meeting.
11. With the agreement of the Working Group, Prof. Dr Lincoln Quevedo from Bolivia was invited to chair the meeting.
12. The agenda of the meeting is presented as in Annex 3 to this document.
13. After a thorough discussion of all the documentation available, a number of conclusions and recommendations were formulated, to which all the members of the Working Group agreed. The final versions of these conclusions and recommendations were circulated to all members of the Working Group shortly after the meeting. A few minor amendments were suggested. The final version of the conclusions is presented as in Annex 1 to this document, and the recommendations of the Mahogany Working Group as Annex 2.
14. The Comments by the Secretariat are included in Annex 4.
15. The Conference of the Parties is requested to consider this and to decide on further actions or activities, as appropriate.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Regarding decision 11.4, paragraph c i)

1. From the information presented in the report by TRAFFIC and from the national reports, it was clear that the countries that had voluntarily included their populations in Appendix III (in particular Bolivia, Brazil and Peru) had in the past three years made considerable progress in the implementation of the Appendix-III listing, and thereby in the effective regulation of harvest as well as national and international trade. This confirms that there is a benefit from an Appendix-III listing.
2. Some range States, however, have difficulties (in varying degrees) with implementing the listing. These countries could consider including their populations as well to ensure a more effective implementation of the Convention for this species. Such an inclusion could in particular eliminate the current confusion regarding the use of the CITES permits and certificates of origin.
3. To facilitate correct implementation of the Appendix-III listing, all countries should provide a sample copy of their certificates of origin to the Secretariat for distribution to the Parties.

### Regarding Decision 11.4, paragraph c ii)

4. The analysis of the trade data demonstrated some inconsistencies between information provided by importing and exporting countries, and reporting procedures should be improved. However, it also demonstrated that the Parties concerned make an effort to carry out the trade in *Swietenia macrophylla* in accordance with the provisions of Article V of the Convention.
5. However, from the reports by range States and importing countries it was also evident that illegal trade occurs, although the extent of it differs from country to country. This reflects that this is an important issue for all countries concerned, and bilateral dialogues could contribute to resolve this problem.
6. The Working Group recognized that there are problems with regard to border controls between some range States and/or importing countries. Nevertheless all should take adequate measures to remedy this to the extent possible, recognizing that in certain areas this is not easy, even if sufficient staff are available.

### Regarding Decision 11.4, paragraph c iii)

7. In different parts of the distribution range of bigleaf mahogany, the forest cover has been reduced for various reasons, but in particular owing to the increasing agricultural land and pastures.
8. Some countries still have forest areas of various sizes in with a confirmed or potential occurrence mahogany in undetermined quantities and densities. Extensive field studies are needed to assess the occurrence of mahogany and to determine the level at which the species can be exploited sustainably. Considerable funding is required to carry out these studies.
9. During the meeting, information was presented that demonstrated that regeneration took place in areas that had been exploited. However, adequate information is not available on the status of regeneration in the majority of countries.
10. In recent years, progress has been made in some countries with the generation of information on management programmes and conservation of the species. However, there were differences between the various countries with regard to the level of knowledge and availability of information on these subjects.

11. In addition, the Working Group emphasized the importance of protected areas and conservation units as germplasm reservoirs of mahogany. The importance of those areas is particularly relevant for countries where deforestation or the reduction of the populations have been more extensive. Sustainable management within and outside protected areas should be promoted.

Regarding Decision 11.4, paragraph c iv)

12. It was evident that there are information exchange problems between range States and consumer States that complicate the implementation of Appendix III.
13. All participants recognized that the exchange of information is an important issue. This information exchange should not be limited to incidental cases, but should take place on a regular basis. Countries that have developed procedures for management of natural forests containing *Swietenia macrophylla* (such as related silviculture techniques or regeneration programmes) should provide these as soon as possible to the other range States. Also information regarding procedures related to the regulation of harvest and internal transport control and export regulations should be distributed to the other range States as soon as it becomes available. This also applies to the detection of any illegal international trade.
14. On the national level, information exchange between the Management and Scientific Authorities, the forestry sector, Customs and other enforcement authorities should be smooth and regular.

Regarding Decision 11.4, paragraph c v)

15. The Working Group considered that, given its remit and the scope of its expertise, it had no competence to evaluate issues that would have implications for future listings of other species in Appendix III.

National issues

16. The following observations made during the meeting of the Mahogany Working Group of the Conference of the Parties that have national implications only.
  - a) Range States should enforce their control mechanisms, improve communications between national CITES authorities and national forestry organizations and, to the extent possible, establish tracking procedures from the moment of harvest to the moment of export or internal use. They should also consider making it obligatory that export documents be endorsed by Customs.
  - b) Range States should increase inspections of shipments of mahogany timber and timber of similar species before export.
  - c) Argentina and Bolivia requested TRAFFIC to look into the problems related to the trade through their common border (cf. recommendation No. 5).
  - d) Range States should regularly inform national industries about all measures related to the national and international trade in mahogany.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### General

1. Considering that the meeting of the Mahogany Working Group has created a level of information exchange between Management and Scientific Authorities of all the range States of the species that will facilitate the implementation of the Convention both on a national level as on a regional level, and at the same time will also facilitate the coordination between producer and consumer States, the Working Group suggests that the Conference of the Parties extends the mandate of the Working Group until its 13th meeting. This would allow it to evaluate the important issues that were identified at its first meeting\*, and others the Conference of the Parties considers opportune.

\* Among the issues that require further consideration are illegal trade, the improvement of information exchange related to international trade between producer and consumer States, and information related to the progress on the management and monitoring of the species.

### Regarding decision 11.4, paragraph c i)

2. Noting the discrepancies in the trade data when comparing information provided by importing and exporting countries, the range States concerned should ask UNEP-WCMC to provide annually comparative tabulations so that each can evaluate these for its own trade regulation purposes.

### Regarding decision 11.4, paragraph c ii)

3. Importing countries, detecting illegal or suspicious shipments should immediately inform the country of origin about this.
4. In order to combat illegal trade, countries of export or re-export could consider to inform directly the country of destination concerned about permits or certificates issued, or could consider to include in their website basic information included in these (e.g. permit number, date of issuance, country of destination, species and volume).
5. Considering that there is not enough information available to estimate the levels of illegal trade between range States and other countries, the Working Group recommends that efforts be made to obtain this information and that the Secretariat looks into the possibility to contract TRAFFIC International to conduct the study.

### Regarding decision 11.4, paragraph c iii)

6. Aware that a non-detriment finding is not required for the export of *Swietenia macrophylla* specimens, the Working Group believes that population studies are needed to ensure sustainable utilization of the resource and that such studies require substantial financial support. It encourages range States to seek financial assistance actively for such studies through established organizations such as FAO or ITTO.
7. In spite of the great efforts and progress made in countries in the region concerning the management of *Swietenia macrophylla*, the Working Group request the Secretariat to investigate the possibility of obtaining funds for facilitating the implementation of CITES in range States with regard to mahogany and other CITES timber species.

Regarding decision 11.4, paragraph c iv)

8. Range States that have developed forest management techniques for forests containing *Swietenia macrophylla* (e.g. silviculture techniques, regeneration programmes) as well as regulations of harvest, internal transport control and export, should distribute this information as soon as possible to the other range States.
9. Management and Scientific Authorities should work closely together with national and international forestry experts for the purpose of developing procedures or mechanisms to improve trade controls (e.g. training, timber identification, etc.).
10. When specific border control problems exist between neighbouring countries, these should be resolved bilaterally, involving external experts as appropriate, including joint capacity building.

Regarding decision 11.4, paragraph c v)

11. There were no recommendations.

AGENDA OF THE MEETING OF THE MAHOGANY WORKING GROUP

Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia), 3-5 October 2001

Preliminaries

1. Opening statements
2. Election of a Chairman
3. Adoption of the Agenda

Background

4. CITES context (including overview of the listing) (United Kingdom)
5. Background on previous mahogany meetings (Secretariat)

Review of the status of the species [Decision 11.4, paragraph c. iii]

- 6.1 An assessment of the conservation status of *Swietenia macrophylla* in South America (presentation by Conservation International)
- 6.2 Evaluation of mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King) in Mesoamerica (MWG1 Doc. 6.2)

Review of the effectiveness of current and potential Appendix-III listings and analysis of legal and illegal trade [Decision 11.4, paragraphs c.i) and c.ii)]

7. CITES Appendix-III implementation for big-leafed mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*)
8. National reports

*Range States that have included Swietenia macrophylla in Appendix III*

- Bolivia (MWG1 Doc. 8.8)
- Brazil (MWG1 Doc. 8.12)
- Colombia (MWG1 Doc. 8.15)
- Costa Rica (MWG1 Doc. 8.6)
- Mexico (MWG1 Doc. 8.1)
- Peru (MWG1 Doc. 8.4)

*Other range States*

- Belize (MWG1 Doc. 8.13)
- Ecuador (MWG1 Doc. 8.10)
- Guatemala (MWG1 Doc. 8.11)
- Honduras (MWG1 Doc. 8.5)
- Nicaragua (MWG1 Doc. 8.14)
- Panama (MWG1 Doc. 8.2)
- Venezuela (MWG1 Doc. 8.3)

### *Importers*

- United Kingdom (MWG1 Doc. 8.7)
- United States of America (MWG1 Doc. 8.9)

### Next steps

9. How to encourage the exchange of information by CITES Management and Scientific Authorities on the implementation of the Convention and import/export controls. [Decision 11.4, paragraph c.i)]
10. Evaluation of appropriate measures to widen the scope of Appendix-III listings [WG1 Doc. 11; text of Resolution Conf. 9.25 (Rev.)] [Decision 11.4, paragraph c.v)]

### Reporting and conclusions

11. Evaluation of all information presented at the meeting
12. Conclusions
13. Procedures for drafting of the final report to the Conference of the Parties
14. Closure of the meeting



COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. Although the Working Group made a serious effort to address all the issues included in Decision 11.4, several of these could not be fully addressed because of lack of information. This relates in particular to the subject of illegal trade and the conservation status of *Swietenia macrophylla*.
- B. The TRAFFIC report on the CITES Appendix-III implementation for big-leafed mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) indicates that the implementation has improved, but several Parties still noted that they had some difficulties, in particular with regard to the use of certificates of origin, and the apparent confusion about which certificates are valid. Despite the recommendation by the Working Group that the Parties concerned provide the Secretariat with samples of these certificates for distribution to the Parties, none was received.
- C. Illegally cut timber is still traded illegally, mainly between countries in the region. However, the Secretariat is aware that such illegally cut timber is also exported, in some instances accompanied by permits issued by the Management Authority.
- D. Many of the range States have expressed the need for population studies in order to ensure sustainable exploitation of the resource, although non-detriment findings are not required for Appendix-III species. It would therefore seem logical to make this species subject to the provisions of Article IV, paragraph 2 (b) of the Convention by including it in Appendix II.
- E. The Secretariat does not believe that the issues that could not be fully addressed by the Working Group could be resolved at a subsequent meeting. Such meetings, involving range States, importing States and interested organizations are useful because of the possibility of exchanging information. However, from the conclusions and recommendations it is clear that the meeting can not fully address all the important issue related to the trade in this species.
- F. The Secretariat believes that the fundamental problems related to the conservation and management of, and trade in this species can not be resolved by its inclusion in Appendix III, and recommends that the range States seriously consider supporting an Appendix-II listing.