

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

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

Consideration of proposals for amendment of Appendices I and II

PROPOSALS TO AMEND APPENDICES I AND II

This document is being distributed at the request of Guatemala.

PRESENTATION BY GUATEMALA ON THE INCLUSION OF BIG LEAF MAHOGANY (*swietenia macrophylla*) IN CITES APPENDIX II

MAHOGANY AND CITES, TEN YEARS OF RESEARCH

In Central America alone, of the 45 million hectares of mahogany forest reported 50 years ago, only 13 million remained in the 1990s. Illegal international commerce has been one of the major threats to the species.

In 1992, at the Eighth Conference of the Parties, a proposal to include Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) in CITES Appendix II was presented by Costa Rica and USA. It provided enough evidence of the decline of the species in all its range and fulfilled the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II. In the end the proposal was withdrawn.

At the Ninth Conference of Parties in 1994, The Netherlands and El Salvador proposed the inclusion of mahogany in CITES Appendix II but it was narrowly defeated by only a few votes.

In 1997 at COP 10, Bolivia and USA again submitted a proposal to include mahogany in Appendix II. Again it was narrowly defeated by only a few votes.

At COP10 a Working Group on Mahogany was formed. Many range states committed to include their populations in Appendix III in order to monitor trade. To date, of the 14 range states, the following have included mahogany in Appendix III: Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Costa Rica and Mexico.

Today at COP 12, Nicaragua and Guatemala have submitted a new proposal to include mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) in Appendix II (COP 12 Prop. 50) because the general tendencies for international trade in mahogany have not changed. The threat is now greater than ever.

We must insist that Appendix III has not an adequate instrument for the control of illegal traffic of mahogany and furthermore, it does not support the strengthening of sustainable management activities. It is only an instrument to monitor commerce.

Guatemala can establish control and management measures that are as strict or even stricter than those of CITES. What Guatemala cannot do alone is to control illegal international commerce and that is a significant contribution that the Convention would give us by including mahogany in Appendix II. Moreover, the inclusion of mahogany in Appendix II would give consumers the certainty that they are investing in the conservation of the species and would be an important step in safeguarding the market and assuring a constant and sustainable supply of this raw material.

GUATEMALA, HISTORY AND CURRENT SITUATION

The exploitation of mahogany has a long history in the tropical lowlands of Guatemala. The extraction of mahogany gained economic importance as of 1870. From 1900 to 1956 an average of 37,500 m³ was harvested annually. From 1944, that average went up to 100,000 m³ per year. By 1970, the FAO warned Guatemala that the fragile forests of the country were better suited for the controlled extraction of timber and the exploitation of non-timber forest products.

150 years ago, Guatemala had six million hectares of mahogany forests. Today, we have 1.5 million hectares completely transformed to agriculture and grazing. Mahogany is well in its way to commercial extinction in a further 2.9 million hectares as a result of uncontrolled and illegal exploitation. Only 0.8 million hectares of forest is under total protection and further 0.8 million hectares is where forest management is carried out. This last area is where Guatemala is placing its hope for sustainable management.

Between 1986 and 1993, the extraction of timber in Guatemala was chaotic and uncontrolled. Annually, more than 10,000 m³ of mahogany was confiscated. Beginning in 1994, a new process began whereby buffer zones surrounding protected areas were managed by local communities and private companies. At the moment there are 530,000 hectares of managed forests. Of these, 314,000 hectares (59% of the total) are certified to standards set by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Unsustainable and illegal extraction of mahogany has not stopped; it is a problem we are still facing.

Currently, mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) constitutes 31% of the total volume of extracted timber from the subtropical latifoliated forests under management in Guatemala. Trade in this species provides 80% of the income from forest activities from this type of forest in our country. If mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) disappears commercially, management operations could also disappear and along with that, thousands of hectares of forests to a changed of use of land.

For all the producers who make the effort to manage and certify the management of the forest, as is the case in Guatemala, production costs for mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) are higher than for those who do not do this. Illegal felling and trade contributes to lowering the price and provide littler incentive towards responsible forest management. Without effective controls of this international trade this phenomenon will continue to destroy the remaining mahogany forests and threaten the survival of the species.

We must remember that the objective of the proposal to include mahogany in Appendix II is to strengthen legal and sustainable forest management. It is a proposal for the natural wild populations of mahogany found in Central and South America. It will not affect mahogany plantations outside Latin America.

We do need the support of the international community to control illegal and uncontrolled international trade in mahogany that does not come from legal and sustainable forest management. The CITES Appendix II listing would provide that mechanism.

As a result of all of this and aware that this decision will be a significant advance in the protection of mahogany and of the tropical forests where it is found, Guatemala strongly requests the inclusion of *Swietenia macrophylla* in Appendix II of the CITES Convention.

Finally we are enclosing a memento of mahogany. It is a sample from the forest communities who are responsibly managing their forests and who are here to observe the actions of their governments on this issue, which is of vital importance to us.

Thank you very much

Guatemala official delegation in CITES COP 12