

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



Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
The Hague (Netherlands), 3-15 June 2007

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Trade control and marking issues

PHYSICAL INSPECTION OF TIMBER SHIPMENTS

1. This document has been submitted by Germany, on behalf of the European Community Member States acting in the interest of the European Community.

Background

2. There is a growing concern expressed by many international organizations for the conservation of tropical forests given the role they play in the global conservation of biodiversity and as a primary resource on which many local communities depend for their livelihoods.
3. An increasing number of timber trade organizations are also expressing concern and interest for the conservation of tropical forests resources and for their possible sustainable use, through the elaboration and implementation of *ad hoc* 'forest management plans'.
4. Whilst CITES has started to address these concerns by listing relevant species in Appendix II, these can only be effective if controls can be properly enforced.
5. CITES authorities often face problems in identifying, inspecting and endorsing CITES timber shipments at export and import.
6. These difficulties, encountered especially by those Parties that are major timber exporters and importers, can cause significant enforcement problems and difficulties in implementing CITES provisions for timber.

Inspection, identification and measurement of timber shipments

7. Identification material for CITES-listed timber species has been developed by a range of Parties and organizations. This material however, is not always known to CITES authorities or accessible to enforcement agencies.
8. Technological developments such as DNA research increasingly offer additional tools for identification purposes of timber in trade, both for identification of species and the origin of the specimens.
9. CITES provisions furthermore require that the quantity of specimens indicated on the CITES permit or certificate matches the quantity being imported. In particular the traded quantities must match or be inferior to the quantities declared in Box 9 of the permit.

10. While verifying the quantity reported on the CITES permit and the one actually imported can be relatively simple for the vast majority of species included in the Appendices, provided that controls are carried out at import, this can prove to be difficult for timber.
11. The inspection, identification and assessment of the volume of timber shipments can be very difficult, owing to various conditions, such as for instance the various sizes of elements of packed sawn wood, the possibility of having mixed shipments with wood of a different species hidden under logs of another species, the difficulty of accessing the containers in which the shipments are transported, the difficult identification, especially of sawn wood elements, and the fact that timber is often transported in very large quantities.
12. Moreover depending on the specific annotation with which a timber species is included in CITES (#5; #6; #7), different parts and products are subject to the provisions of the Convention. In Resolution Conf. 10.13 (Rev. CoP13), definitions are provided in relation to timber parts and derivatives, according to the HS system.
13. According to these definitions, even pallets, bundles, covers and protections, and covering sawn wood elements have to be taken into account for the total determination of the volume, even if it is known that they are not commercially valuable. With the practices currently in use, this can lead to a different total volume calculation when inspecting the shipment at the port of import and therefore to possible seizures.
14. Additionally, when inspecting logs or round wood in general, it would be of prime importance for the inspectors to know that the commercial measure of logs taken sometimes excludes the bark, sapwood and possible defective parts of the log, and also that various degrees of tolerance have to be applied in order to take into account the continuous variations in size and moisture content due to the hygroscopicity of wood.

Recommendation

15. Therefore, Germany, on behalf of the Member States of the European Community, believes that action should be taken in order to give guidance to the Parties with regard to the enforcement of CITES timber listings, with a particular focus on identification and on the development of a methodology for the physical inspection of timber shipments.
16. Accordingly, Germany is submitting two draft decisions directed to the Standing Committee and the Secretariat in the Annex to this document, as a joint proposal of the Member States acting on behalf of the European Community.

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat agrees with the proponent that Parties would benefit from further advice and guidance on timber identification tools and methodologies related to physical inspection of timber shipments.
- B. The Secretariat notes that having the Standing Committee develop implementation guidelines for CITES-listed timber species, focusing primarily on development of a methodology for physical inspections of timber shipments, represents a major undertaking, though presumably much work on inspection of timber shipments has already been done by various bodies and organizations.
- C. Both proposed draft decisions could be directed to the Secretariat and be subject to available staff time and funding, firstly to identify existing timber identification tools, and secondly to draft, in consultation with the Plants Committee, Parties and relevant organizations (including the World Customs Organization), a methodology for physical inspections of timber shipments. A third draft decision would be needed, directing the Standing Committee to consider the information provided by the Secretariat with a view to establishing draft guidelines for implementation of CITES controls for timber species, for consideration at CoP15.

DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Physical inspection of timber shipments

Directed to the Secretariat

- 14.XX The Secretariat, in consultation with the Plants Committee, CITES Parties and relevant organizations, shall identify existing timber identification tools for CITES-listed species and look-alike species and indicate how these can be accessed by CITES authorities. On the basis of these tools and technological developments, it shall identify gaps and elements for further work and report to the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 14.XX The Standing Committee, in consultation with the Secretariat, range States, other Parties and relevant organizations, shall develop guidelines for the enforcement of timber listings based on unified criteria, focusing in particular on the development of a methodology to carry out physical inspections of timber shipments.