

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Colombo (Sri Lanka), 23 May – 3 June 2019

Interpretation and implementation matters

Regulation of trade

Identification of specimens in trade

IDENTIFICATION OF CITES-LISTED TREE SPECIES

1. This document has been submitted by the Plants Committee.\*
2. At its 17th meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.166 to 17.169 on *Identification (timber)* as follows:

***Directed to Parties***

17.166 *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.*

***Directed to the Plants Committee***

17.167 *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 *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.*

#### **Directed to the Secretariat**

17.169 *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.*

#### Implementation of Decisions 17.166 to 17.169

3. The Plants Committee considered the implementation of Decision 17.167 at its 23rd and 24th meetings (PC23, Geneva, July 2017; PC24, Geneva, July 2018) on the basis of documents [PC23 Doc. 18.1](#) (submitted by the Secretariat) and [PC24 Doc. 15.1](#) (submitted by the co-chairs of the Plants Committees' timber identification working group).
4. In document [PC24 Doc 15.2](#), the Secretariat reported that a lack of specific funding had prevented implementation of Decision 17.169, supporting the implementation of Decisions 17.166 to 17.168. The Secretariat nevertheless highlighted several ongoing initiatives that contribute to improving the capacity of Parties for timber identification. It mentioned the completion of the CITESwoodID by German CITES authorities, which now includes 44 CITES-listed species in trade and 32 look-alike species (see also document [PC23 Doc. 18.2](#)), and a series of training activities on the *UNODC Best Practice Guide for Forensic Timber Identification*<sup>1</sup>. The Secretariat described three projects in East Africa, Guatemala, and Indonesia with timber identification components that are being funded under the EU-CITES project *Supporting sustainable management of endangered tree species and conservation of the African Elephant*, and further noted the timber action plan of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation in the CITES North American Region.
5. At PC24, the Plants Committee established an in-session working group to:
  - a) assess the progress achieved in the implementation of Decisions 17.166 to 17.169 on *Identification of timber*, and consider the recommendations under paragraph 12 a) and d) of document PC24 Doc. 15.1 and paragraph 10 of document PC24 Doc. 15.2, as well as points specified in plenary; and
  - b) develop an updated set of draft decisions on timber identification, using as a basis the draft decisions as read in plenary by the representative of North America (Mr. Benitez Diaz), taking into consideration the points raised in plenary by the Chair of the Plants Committee.
6. Based on the report of the in-session working group, the Plants Committee recommended the deletion of Decision 17.166, noting that the focus of this Decision is a long-term instruction to Parties and its direction would be better placed within Resolution Conf. 10.13 (Rev. CoP15) on *Implementation of the Convention for timber species*. This recommendation is included in the proposed revisions of said Resolution, which are presented in document CoP18 Doc. 50. The Committee also recommended the replacement of Decisions 17.167 to 17.169 with the draft decisions presented in Annex 1 to the present document [see document [PC24 Com. 3 \(Rev. by Sec.\)](#)].

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/Guide\\_Timber.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/Guide_Timber.pdf)

## Recommendations

7. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
  - a) adopt the draft decisions on *Identification of timber and other wood products* presented in Annex 1 to this document, and
  - b) note the progress made on the implementation of Decisions 17.166 to 17.169, and agree that they be deleted.

## COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat recommends the adoption of the Plants Committee's proposals with some corrections and an addition mentioned in paragraphs B to E below. Draft decisions that incorporate these amendments are presented in Annex 2.
- B. To clarify reporting between the Plants and Standing Committees, the Secretariat proposes the following amendment to draft decision 18.A, paragraph e) and an additional decision 18.DD:

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

....

- e) update the Standing Committee, as appropriate, on progress made on the implementation of Decisions 18.AA to 18.CC; and report its findings and recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.

### **Directed to the Standing Committee**

18.DD The Standing Committee shall review any updates received from the Plants Committee on the implementation of Decisions 18.AA to 18.CC, and provide recommendations to the Plants Committee, as appropriate.

- C. To avoid ambiguity in draft decision 18.CC, paragraph b), the Secretariat proposes the following modification:
  - b) make the currently available guidance on wood identification accessible to Parties ~~on a dedicated webpage of~~ through the CITES website; and

The rationale of this proposed modification is that the CITES website currently has a dedicated page on identification materials, where there is a dedicated section on tree and timber identification materials. Furthermore, as indicated in documents CoP18 Doc. 22.1 on *Capacity building and identification materials* and CoP18 Doc. 54.1 (including the draft decision contained in Annex 1), the Secretariat intends to focus on revising and updating the CITES Virtual College during the upcoming intersessional period including its identification materials page ([https://cites.org/eng/imp/identification\\_materials/index.php](https://cites.org/eng/imp/identification_materials/index.php)), in order to make all identification materials available in a more user-friendly, and consolidated manner. The proposed change thus ensures that the collection and sharing of information regarding identification materials for timber species would remain in accordance with the overall effort of the Secretariat on identification materials.

- D. In draft decision 18.BB, paragraph a), the Secretariat proposes a different wording to clarify sentence a) and to align sentence e) with draft decision 18.BB's introductory clause 'Parties are encouraged to collaborate with the Plants Committee':
  - a) *working with institutions having wood identification expertise, in order to share information related to timber identification methods, tools and protocols for enforcement and customs officers;*

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~~ Plants Committee.*

E. In draft decision 18.CC c), the Secretariat proposes a different wording to clarify the sentence:

~~report to the Plants Committee progress and updates of the paragraph supra.~~

report to the Plants Committee on progress with the implementation of this Decision.

F. In Annex 3, the Secretariat has indicated the anticipated workload and budget implications for implementing the draft decisions, as amended.

## Draft decisions on Identification of timber and other wood products

### 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 in identifying 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 to 18.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 the World Resources Institute (WRI) 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; and
- c) report to the Plants Committee progress and updates of the paragraph supra.

**Draft decisions on Identification of timber and other wood products:  
Amendments proposed by the Secretariat**

(new text is underlined; deleted text appears in ~~strike through~~)

***Directed to the Plants Committee***

- 18.AA 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, as appropriate, on progress made on the implementation of Decisions 18.AA to 18.CC; and report its findings and recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.

***Directed to Parties***

- 18.BB 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, in order to 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~~ Plants Committee.

***Directed to the Secretariat***

- 18.CC 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

the World Resources Institute (WRI) 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~~ through the CITES website; and
- c) ~~report to the Plants Committee progress and updates of the paragraph supra.~~ report to the Plants Committee on progress with the implementation of this Decision.

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

18.DD The Standing Committee shall review any updates received from the Plants Committee on the implementation of Decisions 18.AA to 18.CC, and provide recommendations to the Plants Committee, as appropriate.

TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING  
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. The authors of this document propose the following tentative budget and source of funding.

The Secretariat propose the following tentative budget and sources of funding:

Plants Committee:

The Plants Committee is expected to gather and analyse a potentially substantial amount of information, which has workload implications, but will not require additional external funding.

Standing Committee:

The Standing Committee may have to review updates submitted by the Plants Committee, which would have workload implications, but will not require additional external funding.

Secretariat:

The Secretariat is expected to liaise with institutions and collect information to be analysed by the Plants Committee. This has no direct extrabudgetary implications but will increase the Secretariat's workload.