

Electronic Signatures on CITES Permits and certificates

Guidance

Reference is made to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18), paragraph 2 and e), paragraph 3 l) and q), paragraph 24 a) and Annex 1, paragraph l)

In Decision 18.125, paragraph e), the Conference of the Parties invites Parties using electronic CITES systems to:

1. consider **UN/CEFACT Recommendation 14** on *Authentication of trade documents*¹ as good practice when implementing the electronic equivalent of signatures and seals for electronic CITES permitting systems and exchanges;
2. **authenticate each user** who has access to the electronic system using username and passwords, and/or similar technologies, or both;
3. ensure that electronic CITES systems keep an **audit trail**, i.e. keep electronic records (including, but not limited to, confirmation of transmission and receipt with associated time stamps and message headers) that enable the Management Authority to identify each person who requested, approved, processed, issued, endorsed, or altered electronic CITES permits and certificates;
4. keep **archives** of audit trails for no fewer than five years after the expiry date of the permit or certificate, or no fewer than five years after the date that the trade was reported in the Party's annual report, whichever is later;
5. provide the CITES Secretariat with copies of all **valid electronic signatures** it uses for issuance of permits and certificates in accordance with Article IX (4) of the Convention and paragraph 3 q) of Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Permits and certificates*;
6. notify the Secretariat immediately when authenticated users are removed or no longer authenticated; and
7. recognize that in electronic CITES systems that meet the above requirements in paragraphs 1-6 above, the electronic equivalent of a physical signature and seal may be provided through the authenticated identification of any of the following individuals: the permit applicant (if appropriate); the official who issued or authorized the issuance of permit or certificate; the official who altered the permit or certificate; the issuing authority; and the inspecting official who endorsed the permit or certificate.

¹ https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/recommendations/rec14/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFAC_T2014_6E_Rec14.pdf