



NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2017/051

Geneva, 22 July 2017

CONCERNING:

Secretary-General's Certificate of Commendation

1. In 2002, the Secretariat advised the Parties of the introduction of certificates of commendation that would be issued, at the Secretary-General's discretion, to recognize exemplary actions related to enforcement.
2. In 2008 the Secretariat posted on the CITES website information on the factors taken into account in awarding a certificate of commendation.
3. The latest such certificate was awarded to the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (CITES Management Authority) in recognition of the exemplary work conducted in relation to the 14 March 2014 seizure of an illegal shipment of 3,235 metric tonnes (29,434 pieces) of rosewood (*Dalbergia* spp.) logs, with an estimated market value in excess of USD 50 million.
4. The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) of Singapore initiated a criminal case against the company named as the consignee of the rosewood and its managing director. The director and the company were prosecuted for importing a CITES-listed species into Singapore without the requisite CITES permit. The accused argued that the shipment was not "imported" into Singapore, but merely "in transit" to another country, and that as such, different regulatory requirements applied. The accused were subsequently acquitted twice by a District court, but AVA persisted and, after two appeals, the High Court of Singapore in March 2017 ruled that the charges had been proven beyond reasonable doubt. The High Court reversed the orders of acquittal and the managing director was sentenced to 3 months imprisonment and the maximum fine of SGD 500,000, whilst the company was sentenced to the maximum fine of SGD 500,000. The High Court also ordered that the rosewood logs be forfeited to AVA.
5. The Secretariat believes that the case represents an excellent example of persistence by authorities to successfully address illegal trade in CITES-listed specimens. The efforts by AVA are testament to the outstanding work that is being done in Singapore to combat wildlife and forest crime. The conviction of the perpetrators is sending a clear message that wildlife crime will not be tolerated, and that those involved will be brought to justice.
6. The certificate was presented during the joint session of the 29th meeting of the CITES Animals Committee and the 23rd meeting of the CITES Plants Committee, held in Geneva on 22 July 2017.