

NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2024/079

Geneva, 4 July 2024

CONCERNING:

Invitation to submit information on the implementation of the measures and activities
in the Outcome document
of the CITES Task Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species

1. At its 19th meeting, the Conference of the Parties, *inter alia*, adopted Decisions 19.89 and 19.90, paragraph a), on the *Task Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species*, as follows:

Directed to the Parties

19.89 *Parties are encouraged to fully implement the measures and activities outlined in the [Outcome document of the CITES Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of listed tree species](#), as relevant to them, to prevent and combat illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species, and to report on the implementation of this Decision to the Secretariat.*

Directed to the Secretariat

19.90 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *seek information from Parties on their implementation of Decision 19.89 and report to the Standing Committee on the work undertaken by Parties to implement the measures and activities outlined in the Outcome document of the CITES Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of listed tree species;*
2. In addition, paragraph 3.5 b) in the Task Force outcome document (see Annex to the present Notification for ease of reference) invites the Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties to gather information on mobile phone and tablet applications for CITES-listed tree species identification currently in use and their availability to different authorities.
 3. Parties are invited to report to the Secretariat on their implementation of Decision 19.89, as well as where available, relevant information on mobile phone and tablet applications for CITES listed tree species identification currently in use and their availability to different authorities.
 4. Reports and information should be submitted by email to info@cites.org with a copy to maroun.abi-chahine@un.org, citing in the subject line "Notification No. 2024/079: CITES "Task

Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

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*Force on illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species". Reports should be submitted to the Secretariat no later than **30 September 2024**.*

CITES Task Force meeting on illegal trade in specimens of listed tree species

OUTCOME DOCUMENT¹

As required in Decision 18.79, participants in the CITES Tree Task Force meeting identified measures and activities to elaborate strategies to prevent and combat illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed tree species² including measures to promote and further strengthen regional and international cooperation.

The measures and activities are listed below:

1. Improve legality and traceability and strengthen the implementation of CITES provisions regarding trade in CITES-listed tree species:

To improve legality and traceability and strengthen the implementation of CITES provisions regarding trade in CITES-listed tree species, it is agreed that it is important for:

1.1. Range states of CITES-listed tree species to:

- a) strictly implement the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 18.7 \(Rev. CoP19\) on Legal acquisition findings](#), to ensure the verification of legal origin prior to issuing any CITES export permit for listed tree species;
- b) strengthen measures to facilitate determination of legal origin, including by conducting field verifications prior to harvest;
- c) put in place measures to facilitate strict controls across the national supply chain, from place of harvest, to mills, to ports of export;
- d) where not yet done, explore the use of different technologies (e.g. satellite imaging), to ensure that logging does not occur in places where not authorized;
- e) strictly implement the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 16.7 \(Rev. CoP17\) on Non-detriment findings](#), to ensure that export permits for CITES-listed tree species are only granted when the national CITES Scientific Authority has advised that such export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species; and
- f) establish mechanisms to enhance coordination and communication between national and regional institutions with a mandate to regulate and control the harvesting of CITES-listed tree species, for example by collaborating with stakeholders developing and implementing national Timber Legality Assurance Systems and Voluntary Certification Standards and Systems.

1.2. Importing Parties to strengthen the verification of CITES documents concerning CITES-listed tree species by exercising due diligence as outlined in [Resolution Conf. 11.3 \(Rev. CoP19\) on Compliance and enforcement](#) in the clearance of such documents.

¹ The outcome document has been updated by the CITES Secretariat after the 19th meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties, to where applicable, reflect Resolutions as revised at CoP19.

² [Appendices | CITES and Checklist of CITES species](#)

1.3. All Parties to:

- a) consider including additional information in the CITES permit (e.g. including in box 5 of the permit information such as concession details and shipment value) or appending relevant documents to the permit to improve traceability and transparency;
- b) consider in addition to security stamps, providing further layers of security to CITES permits and certificates, such as for example by incorporating two-dimensional barcodes (e.g. QR codes), a digital thumbprint, or using paper with security features for permits;
- c) where not yet done, explore automating the CITES permit processes and controls by implementing the [eCITES](#) framework for CITES-listed species, including tree species;
- d) where not yet done, implement national legislation to enable the seizure and confiscation of specimens in transit or being transhipped without a valid permit or certificate or proof of the existence thereof, as anticipated by [Resolution Conf. 9.7 \(Rev. CoP15\)](#) on *Transit and transshipment*. Where any irregularity concerning a CITES-listed tree species shipment in transit or being transhipped is detected and taking action in accordance with national legislation is not possible, take action to immediately provide to the country of destination, or other countries through which the shipment will pass and the CITES Secretariat, all relevant information on the shipment;
- e) provide regular training on timber identification techniques to frontline officers working at key border points or hubs used for trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- f) consider developing a centralized national database for 'blacklisting' of companies and individuals found to be involved in illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- g) explore mechanisms to help simplify Annotations and facilitate the correct application and interpretation of species-specific Annotations, to support legal, and prevent illegal trade;
- h) ensure that a platform to facilitate collaboration between different authorities at national level exists, and, where needed, reach out to INTERPOL for support to forge multi-agency cooperation through the convening of a National Environmental Security Seminar;
- i) ensure that any trade in CITES-listed tree species harvested before the inclusion of the species in the CITES Appendices entered into force, but not exported until after the listing has entered into force, is done in accordance with CITES provisions (e.g. such trade would require a legal acquisition finding as outlined in the provisions of [paragraph 2 in Annex 2 to Resolution Conf. 18.7 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Legal acquisition findings*); and
- j) ensure the safe storage and disposal of seized and confiscated CITES listed tree specimens, and actively pursue recovering associated costs from offenders as anticipated by [paragraph 5 in Resolution Conf. 17.8 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species*, and the provisions of [paragraph 2 in Article VIII](#) of the Convention.

2. Strengthen regional and international collaboration to address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species:

To strengthen regional and international collaboration in addressing illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, it is agreed that it is important for:

2.1 Parties to:

- a) where not yet done, consider developing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and bilateral agreements to facilitate increased collaboration and information exchange to address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, including by drawing upon mechanisms such as [bilateral agreements on mutual administrative assistance in Customs matters](#);

- b) increasingly use [INTERPOL Notices](#) to share information about illegal logging and illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and the criminals involved;
- c) explore opportunities, where illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species is detected, to initiate and conduct controlled deliveries, and to engage with INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) for support as may be needed;
- d) share information on seizures with Parties of origin, transit or destination as applicable, providing information associated with the seizure, for example, information on *modus operandi* and accompanying documentation and, where appropriate, the details of the offenders involved, and any other information that could assist the initiation of investigations as appropriate, in countries of origin, transit and destination or to support the development of risk profiles and the identification of high-risk routes, vessels and entities involved;
- e) include in a timely manner information on seizures of CITES-listed tree species, where possible at species level, in their CITES annual illegal trade reports submitted to the Secretariat in accordance with the reporting deadline set in [Resolution Conf. 11.17 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *National reports*; and
- f) make every effort to participate in the global law enforcement operations convened by INTERPOL and the WCO to address environmental crime, and to consider initiating their own operations at national and regional levels, in particular targeting illegal logging and illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species.

2.2 Intergovernmental agencies and Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) to further expand their work in this field and invite:

- a) INTERPOL to explore opportunities to convene Regional Investigative and Analytical Case (RIACM) meetings focussing on cases involving illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- b) the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to explore opportunities to convene a Wildlife Inter Regional Enforcement (WIRE) meeting focussing on illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, to support the sharing of best practices, foster cross-border cooperation and facilitate information and intelligence exchange;
- c) the WCO to request its Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices to undertake regional analyses concerning illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, that could be made available to Parties to support their work on addressing this illegal trade;
- d) INTERPOL, the WCO, and the UNODC/WCO Container Control Programme (CCP) to explore opportunities to initiate targeted regional or international operations focussing on combating illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- e) the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) to explore opportunities with Parties affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, to mobilize mentorships, twinning programmes or study visits, to facilitate capacity building, engagement and collaboration; and
- f) WENs to consider including in their work programmes, activities aimed specifically at addressing illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species.

3. Detection and identification of illegal consignments of CITES-listed tree species and mobilizing available tools.

To facilitate detection of illegal consignments of CITES-listed tree species, species identification, and the mobilization of available tools, it is agreed:

Regarding detection of illegal consignments of CITES-listed tree species

3.1 that it is important for Parties to:

- a) put in place effective border controls to improve verification of consignments containing CITES-listed tree species and ensure that permits are completed and validated in accordance with CITES provisions;
- b) where not yet done, undertake risk assessments to develop risk profiles specific to CITES-listed tree species, and to reach out to the WCO for support where needed;
- c) implement physical inspection best practices to strengthen detection of illegal timber consignments, for example ensuring advanced inspection of documents to detect any inconsistencies or high-risk indicators, and thorough preparation before undertaking the physical inspection ensuring that all relevant documents and sufficient information about the species in question are at hand to support quick and efficient informed decision-making during the physical inspection process; and
- d) enhance collaboration with shipping agencies to ensure legal trade provisions are respected and take strict action against shipping agencies that commit offences, such as altering bills of lading.

3.2. Parties are encouraged to:

- a) where a need to strengthen national cargo targeting systems exist, encourage national Customs Administrations to draw upon the [WCO Cargo Targeting System](#) and [WCO Customs Risk Management Compendium](#), including to target illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other wildlife crimes, and to reach out to the WCO for support in this regard as may be needed; and
- b) capacitate and provide training to frontline officers responsible for physical inspections regarding timber identification, aiming to have at least one officer available with expert knowledge concerning timber and access to equipment to facilitate such work.

3.3 to invite:

- a) the WCO and the UNODC/WCO-CCP to support authorities in countries affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, and where not yet done, to undertake risk assessments and develop national risk indicators specific to this illegal trade; and
- b) the CITES Secretariat to explore opportunities to in cooperation with the UNODC/WCO-CCP provide training on physical inspection of timber shipments in regions significantly affected by illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species.

Regarding identification of CITES-listed tree species

3.4 Parties are encouraged to:

- a) develop, or apply existing, timber identification technologies and traceability³ systems with a focus on the main CITES-listed tree species traded, to provide access to information on specimens and events in CITES-listed tree species supply chains;
- b) increasingly mobilize forensic science to address illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and to make available resources for the collection and submission of samples from seized tree species to designated accredited forensic laboratories;

³ Traceability is the ability to access information on specimens and events in a CITES-listed species supply chain.

- c) maintain information on laboratories that can assist them with analyses in support of timber identification, for such information to be at hand when needed. Parties are further encouraged to invite any new laboratories that may come to their attention to reach out to the CITES Secretariat to apply for inclusion in the [CITES Directory of laboratories conducting wildlife forensic testing](#);
- d) facilitate the sharing of reference material (wood samples, databases) with recognized institutions, to support the development of forensic analysis techniques and reference databases in different countries, allowing for quick in-country or regional level analysis; and
- e) take note that the [United States Fish and Wildlife Service Forensics Laboratory](#), within the limits of its resources, make its services freely available to any Party to CITES for analyses of samples at its premises, and to reach out to the laboratory for support as may be needed.

3.5 to invite the CITES Secretariat to:

- a) explore the possibility of developing a field guide for timber identification including information on CITES- listed tree species most commonly found in illegal trade;
- b) issue a Notification to the Parties to gather information on mobile phone and tablet applications for CITES-listed tree species identification currently in use and their availability to different authorities;
- c) invite the Plants Committee's specialist on botanical nomenclature to consider including in the CoP19 - CoP20 workplan of the Plants Committee, matters related to nomenclature to facilitate assisting Parties and in particular enforcement authorities, in aspects relating to taxonomy and identification of specimens of CITES-listed tree species in trade.
- d) explore the possibility of establishing a directory of national experts that can be contacted at short notice to support Parties that made seizures of illegally traded CITES-listed tree species with identification.

Regarding available tools

3.6 that various tools exist to support Parties, and that Parties should draw upon available resources concerning timber shipment inspections, such as the *Best Practice Guide for Timber Shipment Inspections* developed for operational law enforcement officers by INTERPOL and the UNODC/WCO-CCP Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation (LEAP), which includes essential information on risk analysis methods, physical inspection of timber shipments, and wood identification, and draw upon the UNODC [Best Practice Guide for Forensic Timber Identification](#).

4. Addressing corruption and mobilizing investigations into illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species:

To address and mitigate corruption risks and to mobilize investigations into illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species, it is agreed that it is important for:

Regarding addressing corruption

4.1 Parties to:

- a) pursue the full implementation of [Resolution Conf. 17.6 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Prohibiting, preventing, detecting and countering corruption, which facilitates activities conducted in violation of the Convention*, including in the context of illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species;
- b) undertake risk assessments to identify high corruption risk areas and to develop and implement strategies to counter corruption, including by developing corruption prevention

policies, codes of conduct and ethics for staff, and whistle blower protection policies; and

- c) publicize information on arrests and prosecutions related to corruption to send a clear and deterrent message that such conduct will not be tolerated.

4.2 Parties are encouraged to:

- a) consider establishing multi agency units consisting of vetted staff to address serious wildlife crime involving high value CITES-listed specimens, such as CITES-listed tree species;
- b) draw upon the tools developed by the UNODC to address and mitigate corruption risks available on the [Enforcement webpage](#) on the CITES Secretariat website, such as the [Scaling Back Corruption - A Guide on Addressing Corruption for Wildlife Management Authorities](#), and take note that UNODC will soon launch a guide entitled *Rooting out Corruption*, developed to specifically address corruption driving forest loss; and
- c) pursue enhancing collaboration between relevant governmental agencies and civil society organizations in support of the implementation of measures to prevent and combat corruption.

4.3 ICCWC partner agencies to continue providing support and capacity building to Parties to combat corruption, including through the implementation of corruption risk assessments, mitigation plans and the deployment of mentorship programmes.

Regarding mobilizing investigations into illicit financial flows

4.4 that it is important for Parties to:

- a) implement national legislation to combat money laundering and facilitate asset forfeiture associated with wildlife crime, and to actively implement activities to bringing together wildlife trade and money laundering expertise, including from financial intelligence units, as anticipated by the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 11.3 \(Rev. CoP19\) on Compliance and enforcement](#);
- b) ensure that investigations and prosecutions concerning wildlife crime, including illegal trade in CITES- listed tree species, also consider additional types of offenses, such as for example tax evasion; and
- c) initiate activities to increase awareness amongst national authorities about the importance of incorporating financial investigations in investigations concerning illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other serious wildlife crimes.

4.5 Parties are encouraged to draw upon the tools and reports developed by the Financial Action Task Force and the Egmont Centre of FIU Excellence and Leadership (ECOFEL) and ICCWC partners available on the [Enforcement](#) and [ICCWC](#) webpages on the CITES Secretariat website, in support of strengthening their work to address illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other serious wildlife crimes.

4.6 ICCWC partner agencies, FATF and ECOFEL to continue providing support and capacity building to Parties to strengthen investigations into illicit financial flows from illegal trade in CITES-listed tree species and other serious wildlife crimes.