

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



Seventeenth meeting of the Plants Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 15-19 April 2008

Timber Issues

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE JOINT ITTO-CITES TIMBER PROJECT: FIRST REGIONAL MEETING

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. The Secretariats of ITTO and CITES are collaborating on a project aimed at ensuring that international trade in CITES-listed timber species is consistent with their sustainable management and conservation. The project is funded over four years (2007-2010) primarily through a grant of around 3 million euro from the European Commission, but the United States of America and the ITTO Bali Partnership Fund are also financial contributors to the project.
3. *Afromosia* (*Pericopsis elata*), big leaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) and ramin (*Gonystylus* spp.) were included in CITES Appendix II in 1992, 2003 and 2005, respectively. Realizing the challenges that range States of these timber species face to implement listing requirements, the project goals are to help countries strengthen their capacities to make non-detriment findings, enhance national legislation and enforcement, and generally to ensure the proper implementation of CITES for these timber species.
4. Under Resolution Conf. 14.4 on *Cooperation between CITES and ITTO regarding trade in tropical timber*, the Conference of the Parties "DIRECTS the CITES Secretariat to cooperate closely with the Secretariat of ITTO on matters related to tropical timber species threatened by international trade and sustainable management of tropical timber producing forests". The Resolution also welcomes the joint ITTO-CITES timber project as an important tool for increased cooperation between CITES and ITTO.
5. The project will complement the work of the Plants Committee. Some activities of the Plants Committee are interlinked with the activities of this project including the Committee's work on Decisions 14.135, 14.145, 14.146. The CITES Secretariat will monitor the activities closely to avoid duplication and to maximize opportunities to integrate the outputs of the project into the Committee's work.
7. At this meeting, the representatives of the ITTO and the CITES Secretariat will provide an oral report of the first regional workshop held under this project, which is planned to be held in early April in Cameroon. The purpose of the workshop is to finalize an action plan for *Pericopsis elata* exported from Cameroon, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
8. The Annex to this document contains a progress report prepared by the ITTO Secretariat in consultation with the CITES Secretariat.
9. The Committee is invited to note the activities and progress of the joint ITTO-CITES timber project.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE JOINT ITTO-CITES TIMBER PROJECT  
14 February 2008

## A. Description

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**Project title:** Ensuring international trade in CITES-listed timber species is consistent with their sustainable management and conservation

**Project lead:** International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

**Project partner:** Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

**Project time-frame:** 2007-2010

**Key species of interest:** *Pericopsis elata* (afroformosa), *Gonystylus* spp. (ramin) and *Swietenia macrophylla* (bigleaf mahogany)

**Target country(ies) or region(s):** Africa (primarily Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Congo); Asia (primarily Indonesia and Malaysia); Latin America (primarily Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru)

## B. Activities

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### Overview

The European Commission (EC) provides 80% of the funding of this project through a grant of around 3 million euro over a four year period. The first instalment of EC funds was received by ITTO on 23 March 2007. Additional funding of US\$500,000 was pledged towards the project by the United States of America and ITTO's Bali Partnership Fund.

Project implementation commenced in July 2007 with a search for regional coordinators. The regional coordinator for Latin America (Mr Ivan Tomaselli, Brazil) began work in November 2007 while the African coordinator (Mr Jean Lagarde Betti, Cameroon) started in January 2008. Mr Thang Hooi Chiew commenced duties at the end of January 2008 as the Asian regional coordinator. It is envisaged that the regional coordinator for Latin America will also play a role in overall coordination of the project in all three regions (in liaison with ITTO and CITES secretariats) as work progresses.

### Description of activities

#### 1. Planning and managing activities

Output 1.1: Detailed project programme for each of the three Regions and range States within them  
Activity 1.1: Planning national and regional projects

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Draft regional project programs for all 3 regions are to be submitted to ITTO by the end of February 2008. These programs will be finalized in March/April 2008. Implementation of approved activities will commence thereafter. The national and regional project programs will be structured around the outputs and activities described below but the emphases will vary between range States and regions.

#### 2. Forest management activities

Output 2.1: Improved utility of forest inventories for CITES  
Activity 2.1: Forest inventory design

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The aim of this activity is to improve inventory design for resource assessment of CITES-listed species by capacity building and applied research to *inter alia* utilize accessible technologies. When these designs are implemented, better estimates of the location, stocking, volumes and growth of the timber species concerned will be obtained. This information forms the basis for conducting non-detriment findings with the consequent setting of harvest and export quotas (if applicable).

Complete new inventories, however, are very demanding in time and resources and are outside the scope of this activity. Hence it will be important to build on the inventory initiatives taken by range States,

including those following ITTO Missions as well as ITTO, FAO and bilateral projects, to assess the precision of current information on the species, and to design and/or undertake research to allow more precise and efficient methods of improving the accuracy of those estimates.

Following the identification of capacity-building and inventory design needs, consultancies, technical studies or other relevant activities will be carried out to meet those knowledge gaps.

Output 2.2: Improved management of species - so as to ensure that species population levels are maintained

Activity 2.2: Silviculture

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The aim of this activity is to improve knowledge concerning the ecology and silviculture of each species through information gathering – including scientific literature reviews, capacity building, and research design to fill identified knowledge gaps. This work may be conducted at the national or regional level

Bigleaf mahogany, afrormosia and ramin are characterized by incomplete knowledge of their ecology, especially in relation to regeneration after logging. All also suffer from a paucity of data on stand dynamics and growth rates, very few permanent growth plots having been established, with the exception of Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia in the case of ramin. While additional plots or studies of regenerated areas will take a long time to yield results, they represent an essential component of the long-term refinement of sustainability estimates. Sponsored research will focus on practical aspects of species silviculture and ecology, such as growth studies, responses to silvicultural interventions, plantation performance, etc.

Output 2.3: Promoting utilisation that is not detrimental to the survival of the species concerned

Activity 2.3: Management plans/non-detriment findings

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The aim of this activity is to develop or improve forest management plans and/or criteria for non-detriment findings for sustainable management and conservation of the species in each of the range States. The intent of this activity is to support the implementation of relevant CITES Decisions (eg. Decision 14.145 on Bigleaf mahogany) and the integration of information required for CITES in ongoing forest management plans or forest management plan methodologies for the three species, rather than supporting implementation of complete forest management plans.

CITES requires that the designated Scientific Authority(ies) in each range State certify that international trade is not detrimental to the survival of the species concerned. In some cases, this has resulted in the range State establishing an export quota. However, such quotas are often based on weak data, because of a lack of expertise, inadequate data and very broad assumptions. All range States should prepare management plans that document the data and criteria used in setting harvest and export quotas and preferably that also address overall (domestic and export) levels of sustainable use. Such plans are necessarily adaptive and require progressive updating as additional or better data become available.

### 3. *Social, economic and institutional activities*

Output 3.1: Raising stakeholder awareness of the need for sustainable use and appropriate national legislation, and develop regional collaborative strategies

Activity 3.1: National fora and regional working groups

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The aim of this activity is to promote initial or further national fora and regional working groups to raise awareness of sustainable use, of the role of sustainable development, and of CITES legislation.

In all three regions, there is a critical need to create greater awareness among all stakeholders of possible consequences of illegal logging, including the possible loss of these species and its consequent impact on those forests and forest-dependent communities and, conversely, of the opportunities that sustainable use offers in terms of sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Further national fora need to be sponsored to involve and communicate with all stakeholders regarding sustainable forest management and, if necessary, conservation, and to engender strengthened national legislation.

These fora will also ensure greater cooperation at the regional level through meetings of regional working groups, building on the past work of the Mahogany Working Group and regional work on ramin through a tri-national task force. A similar arrangement needs to be established for afrormosia and thus an initial

regional workshop is planned for Africa in April 2008 in order to review the draft regional work program developed by the regional coordinator in liaison with country contacts, identify additional problem areas and initiate the implementation of project activities. Other regional meetings will be convened as necessary once the activities foreseen here have commenced to build on the knowledge gained and to reinforce coordination and policy measures.

Output 3.2: Building trust and cooperation between industry and relevant authorities  
Activity 3.2: Cost-effective regulatory systems

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The aim of this activity is to develop cooperative and cost-effective regulatory systems for product tracking and chains of custody by identifying training needs relating to industry and trade; undertaking market studies; and identifying and implementing economic incentives for compliance.

None of the activities under this project can be fully effective unless a climate of trust and cooperation is developed between the timber industry concerned and the designated Management and Scientific Authorities and Customs agency. While this may require strengthening of punitive provisions in the CITES legislation (see Activity 3.1), training, collaborative market studies, and the development of incentives (such as less expensive regulatory systems for product tracking) provide a more positive and often more productive pathway to achieve this goal.

For two of the timber species concerned, *Swietenia macrophylla* (bigleaf mahogany) and *Pericopsis elata*, (afroormosia), the Appendix-II listing covers logs, sawnwood, and veneer sheets, and in the case of mahogany, plywood. These are relatively simple products for log and product tracking, notwithstanding the efforts of illegal operators to disguise the specimens by mixing the sawn product or veneer sheets in batches with other species or, in the case of *Gonystylus* spp. (ramin), disguise it by painting it. The provisions relating to *Gonystylus* spp., however, extend to all products other than seed, seedlings and tissue cultures. This poses problems in attempting to track or identify specimens in carvings and painted handles and merits a special study as to whether the tracking of such products is an effective use of CITES and other resources and, if so, how it should best be pursued.

ITTO recently surveyed available log tracking technologies and found a range of commercial products in use that are effective in monitoring timber flows. All of the project coordinators have been provided with details of such technologies, including modern techniques like DNA fingerprinting for timber identification and DNA profiling of various species provenances to allow inferences about the source of a given specimen to be made. While such technologies will be considered in country proposals submitted under this project, the most important measures involve their incorporation into low-cost routines of tracking by the established legal industry and the progressive narrowing of the differential costs between legal and illegal operations, assisted by higher risks of discovery and higher penalties for infractions. The latter issues are addressed in the next activity (3.3). Sound systems of log and product tracking may also assist the forest certification process where that is required or relevant.

Output 3.3: Strengthening trade compliance systems  
Activity 3.3: CITES training workshops

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The aim of this activity is to strengthen CITES trade compliance systems by sponsoring training workshops for relevant staff and capacity-building in key CITES compliance areas. In all three regions, compliance systems are often limited by the lack of trained staff. This is sometimes a government budgetary matter rather than a skills issue. Project coordinators will therefore ensure that any staff training and assistance projects submitted by countries under the project include provisions for the national, provincial or local government or timber industry concerned to support compliance staff positions in the future.

Cross-border issues and illegal trade feature in all regions in which the project activities will occur. Training workshops and technical courses to upgrade compliance skills will form an important component of the project. The training needs to include Management Authority field staff, Scientific Authority staff, forest management institutions (where these are not CITES authorities), industry logistics staff, and Customs staff involved in CITES in both exporting and importing countries.

The greatest need appears to be in providing information about CITES requirements and processes to staff responsible for field management, industry logistics, and Customs. Special attention needs to be

given to regional training workshops and to engender collaboration between the agencies concerned. As these workshops are distinct from the regional workshops (activity 3.1), they should focus on training staff responsible for implementing compliance. CITES scientific, legal, and enforcement staff will play a lead role in this training. This should include looking at the most effective means of informing importing countries when shipments are in passage to them and when and where they are likely to arrive and clear Customs.

The primary function of any training workshops for Customs staff should be on awareness of the trade and industry relationships, not primarily on species identification unless the countries concerned have specialised Customs staff in charge of timber shipments and there is no frequent staff turnover. Identification would almost invariably be done by wood technology experts, not Customs staff, whose role is more to act on intelligence and knowledge of the nature of illegal transactions. Nevertheless, the development of training materials on species identification would be useful for the staff of Management and Scientific Authorities, who are likely to have to distinguish these species from others.

#### Activity 3.4: Outreach

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The aim of this activity is to produce technical guides and materials constituting a "tool box" for range States and trading partners. ITTO and CITES have provided and will continue to provide presentations of project outputs at major international meetings (eg. CITES CoP14 (2007), regional FLEG meetings). The websites of both Organizations will be used to disseminate project outputs and findings.

#### **C. Preliminary action plan**

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The preliminary action plan is appended as the final page of this report. Some activities appear to be very lengthy since they will take place throughout the year (eg execution of activity 1.1 and 2.3). Outreach activities will primarily commence once more project activities have been completed, but preliminary work has already begun and will continue with publicity about the Cameroonian workshop, for example. The same applies to future South-American and South-East-Asian meetings. These last two are marked as occurring in August 2008 and November 2008 but these are tentative timings and will be confirmed as soon as possible. Future action plans will be developed for each region since progress and activities will vary by region.

Appendix

PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN

Year 2008													
	Semester 1						Semester 2						
Activity/Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
Preparation Activity 1.1: Planing national and regional projects													Regional Coordinators/ Programme Leader/ Steering Committee
Execution Activity 1.1: Planing national and regional projects													Regional Coordinators/ Programme Leader/ Steering Committee
Preparation Activity 2.1: Forest inventory design													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities
Execution Activity 2.1: Forest inventory design													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities
Preparation Activity 2.2: Silviculture													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities
Execution Activity 2.2: Silviculture													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities
Preparation Activity 2.3: Management plans/non-detriment findings													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities
Execution Activity 2.3: Management plans/non-detriment findings													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities
Preparation Activity 3.1: National fora and regional working groups													Regional Coordinators
Execution Activity 3.1: National fora and regional working groups				Africa			South America				Asia		Regional Coordinators
Preparation Activity 3.2: Cost-effective regulatory systems													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities/ Industry
Execution Activity 3.2: Cost-effective regulatory systems													Regional Coordinators/ Management and Scientific Authorities/ Industry
Preparation Activity 3.3: CITES training workshops													Regional Coordinators/ ITTO-CITES Secretariats
Execution Activity 3.3: CITES training workshops				Africa			South America				Asia		Regional Coordinators/ ITTO-CITES Secretariats
Preparation Activity 3.4: Outreach													Regional Coordinators/ ITTO-CITES Secretariats
Execution Activity 3.4: Outreach													Regional Coordinators/ ITTO-CITES Secretariats