

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

PHYSICAL INSPECTION OF TIMBER SHIPMENTS

1. This document has been prepared by the United States on behalf of the Standing Committee Working Group on Physical Inspection of Timber Shipments, at the request of the Standing Committee\*.

Background

2. At the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP14; The Hague, 2007), Germany, on behalf of the Member States of the European Community, had submitted document CoP14 Doc. 42 on *Physical inspection of timber shipments*, which included two draft Decisions, one directed to the Secretariat and the other to the Standing Committee. Following deliberations in Committee II, revised draft Decisions were developed and ultimately adopted, as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

14.60 *The Secretariat shall establish an electronic working group, which, in consultation with the Plants Committee and relevant intergovernmental organizations, shall:*

- a) *solicit and compile existing procedures adopted by the Parties for:*
  - i) *identification of CITES-listed and look-alike timber species; and*
  - ii) *physical inspection of shipments of CITES-listed timber species; and*
- b) *indicate how those procedures can be accessed by CITES authorities.*

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

14.61 *The Standing Committee, with the support of the Secretariat, and in consultation with Parties and relevant intergovernmental organizations, shall examine the outcome of the working group, to identify the best practices and capacity-building measures that may be implemented with technical and/or financial support from donors.*

3. At the 17th meeting of the Plants Committee (PC17; Geneva, 2008), the Secretariat announced that it would establish the electronic working group by creating a Forum on the CITES website, and that Italy had offered to chair the working group. The Secretariat subsequently issued Notification to the Parties No. 2009/015 (17 April 2009) inviting Parties and relevant intergovernmental organizations to submit the information requested in Decision 14.60.

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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.*

4. At the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC58; Geneva, 2009), Italy reported that, although the working group had attracted wide interest from Parties, it was seeking greater participation from timber-exporting countries. Italy further reported that, at the time of preparation of its document on this matter for SC58, no submissions had yet been received on the CITES Forum on existing procedures for identification or physical inspection of shipments of CITES-listed timber species. However, several countries had subsequently made submissions. The working group met informally at SC58, identified its two main issues as identification and measurement of CITES timber, and agreed that it would circulate a questionnaire to group members on these two issues. It called on interested Parties to join the working group and its discussion forum. A recommendation was made to extend Decisions 14.60 and 14.61 beyond CoP15. The Standing Committee noted the progress of the working group and urged Parties to contribute information for its deliberations.
5. In September 2009, Italy sent out a questionnaire to the working group members, which was aimed at collecting detailed information on current procedures used by Parties for the identification and measurement of timber at inspection places.
6. At CoP15 (Doha, 2010), there was no specific agenda item or document on timber inspection, but in document CoP15 Doc. 19 on *Review of Decisions*, the Secretariat recommended that Decision 14.61 should be updated because work on this subject was ongoing. As a result, the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 14.61 (Rev. CoP15), which reads:

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

*The Standing Committee, with the support of the Secretariat, and in consultation with Parties and relevant intergovernmental organizations, shall consider the outcome of the working group on physical inspection of timber shipments at its 61st meeting, to identify best practices and capacity-building measures that may be implemented with technical and/or financial support from donors, and report at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

7. At SC61 (Geneva, August 2011), Italy, as chair of the working group on this subject, gave an oral report on the progress of the working group and announced that it could no longer serve as chair. The United States offered to confer with other working group members intersessionally in an effort to identify a new chair for the working group and conclude its work.
8. Following SC61, the United States conferred with the working group via email and the CITES Forum and asked if any Party on the working group was willing to carry on as the new chair.
9. At SC62, the United States had submitted SC62 Doc. 36 in which it reported that no Party had been able to assume the chairmanship of the working group, so no further work had been done. However, Italy, the former chair, had provided the United States with a draft written version of the oral report provided at SC61, which summarized the progress made by the working group and the information that Parties had reported regarding the availability of existing techniques and written guidance on timber identification and inspection.
10. At the suggestion of the United States, the Standing Committee agreed that there did not seem to be a strong need for continuing this work. The Standing Committee also agreed that the working group, through the CITES Forum and its members, had identified a number of Parties that reported having standardized procedures for the measurement of timber and timber products as well as identification materials and other guidance to assist in the identification and inspection of timber shipments, and that these materials should be made more widely available.
11. Consequently, the Standing Committee agreed that the United States of America, on behalf of the Working Group on Physical Inspection of Timber Shipments, would prepare a discussion document for the approval of the Chair of the Standing Committee and subsequent submission for CoP16. The Committee further agreed that the discussion document would include a draft decision to be recommended to the Conference of the Parties, as follows:

**Decision 16.XX**

***Directed to the Secretariat***

By the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat shall:

- a) Obtain information and materials from those Parties that have reported that they have developed tools and procedures for the identification and measurement of CITES-listed tree species, and the physical inspection of timber shipments;
  - b) Compile the information on the CITES website so that it can be accessed by CITES plant inspection and enforcement authorities; and
  - c) Incorporate this information into its capacity-building activities related to timber trade.
12. Unless decided otherwise by the Conference of the Parties, this concludes the work initiated at CoP14 on physical inspection of timber shipments and assigned to the Standing Committee.

**COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT**

- A. The Secretariat recommends adoption of the draft decision contained in paragraph 11 of the present document.
- B. The Secretariat believes that Decision 14.61 (Rev. CoP15) has been implemented and therefore recommends that it be deleted.