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

Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Johannesburg (South Africa), 24 September – 5 October 2016

CONSERVATION, TIMBER IDENTIFICATION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CENTRAL AFRICAN BUBINGA (KEVAZINGO) SPECIES

This document has been submitted by Gabon* and the European Union* in relation to proposal No. 56, *Inclusion of* Guibourtia tessmannii, Guibourtia pellegriniana *and* Guibourtia demeusei *in Appendix II*.

* *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.*

Conservation, Timber Identification and Sustainable Management of Central African Bubinga (Kevazingo) species

This information document has been produced in response to concerns over threats to the conservation of Bubinga in its range States. Recent increases in value and demand of *Guibourtia tessmannii* and *Guibourtia pellegriniana* wood has increased pressure on populations and encouraged the development of unmanaged and illegal logging networks. This, together with typically low natural population densities for both species throughout their ranges, constitutes a clear threat to both species' conservation and their sustainable use.

This Inf. doc for Bubinga complements the CITES Appendix II listing proposal for Bubinga (CoP17 Prop. 56) submitted by Gabon and the European Union (EU) and highlights several key elements associated with regards to species distinction (including in relation to 'lookalike' concerns over *Guibourtia demeusei*), use of an Appendix II listing to support species' legal and sustainable management and identify examples of possible support to range States for such management that could be sought from, and offered by, international agencies.

For more extensive information related to the Bubinga species subject to the proposal listing, please refer to CoP17 Prop. 56[1].

CoP Prop. 56 to include *Guibourtia tessmannii*, *Guibourtia pellegriniana* and *Guibourtia demeusei* in App. II

> Include *Guibourtia tessmannii* in Appendix II of CITES in accordance with Article II (2)(a) of the Convention and with Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev.Cop16), Annex 2 a, paragraph B.
>
> Include *Guibourtia pellegriniana* in Appendix II of CITES in accordance with Article II (2)(a) of the Convention and with Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev.Cop16), Annex 2 a, paragraph B.
>
> Include *Guibourtia demeusei* in Appendix II of CITES for reasons of resemblance, in accordance with Article II (2)(b) of the Convention and with Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev.Cop16), Annex 2 b, paragraph A.

Distribution

Distribution data for *Guibourtia tessmannii* and *Guibourtia pellegriniana* suggest that both species are present in Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, with *Guibourtia tessmannii* also likely present in Nigeria, Republic of Congo (RC) and Central African Republic (CAR) ; and *Guibourtia pellegriniana* possibly present in RC.

Guibourtia demeusei has a much larger range than the other two species, extending into the central Congo basin. It occurs in Cameroon, CAR, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the RC. While generally separate in their distributions, range overlap can occur[2].

Common names

The name Bubinga relates to three distinct species belonging to the same genus of African *Guibourtia*: *G. tessmannii*, *G. pellegriniana* and *G. demeusei*. Due to the similarity of their morphology, local names do not distinguish between trees of the species *Guibourtia tessmannii* and *Guibourtia pellegriniana*. In Gabon they are both referred to as Kevazingo, in Cameroon pink Bubinga or Essingang (ewondo) and in Equatorial Guinea they are called Oveng (fang). As well as several local names, *Guibourtia demeusei* is also known as Bubinga (or Red Bubinga in Cameroon) throughout its range[2].

Look alike issues

Guibourtia tessmannii and *Guibourtia pellegriniana* are morphologically close, but differ in the structure of their bark and the anatomy of the wood[3]. These differences are so subtle that distinguishing between the two species is quite difficult for workers in the field. Fresh-cut *Guibourtia demeusei* wood is a deeper red than the other two species, but darkens on exposure resulting in visually similar appearance to *Guibourtia tessmannii* and *Guibourtia pellegriniana* once entering the trade[4]. The similarities in traded timber of these three species has resulted in

---

[1] COP17 Prop. 56 can be found at : https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/prop/060216/E-CoP17-Prop-56.pdf

[2] Mahonghol D et Osborn T. 2015. Évaluation des espèces de bois africains menacées par le commerce international des pays majeurs de l'aire de distribution (Cameroun, Congo, RD Congo et Gabon) vers l'Allemagne et l'UE : une évaluation préliminaire de Guibourtia tessmannii (Bubinga) et de Millettia laurentii (Wenge), Avril 2015, 62 pages.

[3] Bamford M.K., 2005. Early Pleistocene fossil wood from Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania. Quat. Int .129

[4] Pers. Com. Hajo Schmitz-Kretschmer 14th September 2016

widespread confusion along the chain of harvesting to international trade, with an apparent lack of consistency in use of scientific versus local names with trade commonly documented as 'Bubinga' applying to any of the three species.[5]

Increasingly Bubinga is being used as a Hongmu substitute in China and international prices for Bubinga timber have increased significantly in line with demand[2]. Of particular issue is the difficulty of distinguishing wood from *Guibourtia demeusei* from *Guibourtia tessmannii* and *Guibourtia pellegriniana* once the wood has entered trade (see above). According to the Thünen Institute in Germany, while the wood of the three species in trade are difficult to distinguish from an anatomical and morphological perspective, it is, however, possible in principle to differentiate them through DNA analysis, though such technology is still in its infancy and is not applicable or cost effective for frontline enforcement efforts[4]. Due to their close similarity in trade, several internationally recognized wood research institutions group these three species together, including the Thünen Institute ('MacroHolzdata' database) and CIRAD (TROPIX database[6]). Furthermore, the InsideWood database[7] (InsideWood Working Group (IWG)) has no set of characteristics that clearly separates G. *demeusei* from the other two species.

In the EU, the European timber nomenclature EN 13556 (Round and sawn timber)[8] groups the three species under the code GUXX, while other *Guibourtia* species are assigned to other codes.
These similarities in timber appearance, the use of common names locally and in international markets (including the 'lumping' of the three species in data collection) and overlapping ranges are key factors leading to confusion of species differentiation on the international markets.

Use of CITES Appendix II listing to support management and sustainable use of Bubinga

The perception that CITES is primarily a trade ban is one of the greatest challenges to wider use of the Convention for ensuring that the international timber trade is based on legally acquired products from sustainably managed harvests[9]. Species listed within CITES Appendix II are NOT prohibited from international trade, but rather benefit from international cooperation for tackling national concerns such as illegal logging and trade and unsustainable management. A CITES Appendix II listing aims to regulate species trade and prevents them from becoming endangered.

CITES should be seen as a complementary strategy to help implement national laws and policies and more effectively manage timber resources, rather than as a threat or impediment to trade. Appendix II listings provide strong tools for securing the objective of sustainable trade with the requirement to fulfil two crucial export provisions – that the timber has been legally-obtained and that harvest was not detrimental to the survival of the species (through an NDF – see below). Appendix II provisions facilitate the controls, processes, tools and information that can assist countries in managing their timber resources so that species' populations do not reach the point where trade bans may be the only conservation option left.

Illegal logging and illegal timber trade undermine both legal trade and conservation, resulting in loss of foreign revenue and currency exchange, uncollected forest-related taxes and depleted forest resources and services. CITES can effectively help governments to tackle this problem through the verification of permits and the chain-of-custody process that is implicit in CITES provisions. Validation through CITES permits confirms that the specimen has come from legal and sustainable sources, thereby providing stability and confidence in demand-side markets that the Bubinga they purchase is not from illegal sources.

Co-ordination is also important for enforcement of trade controls and national laws governing forestry, especially where these are separate from those relating to CITES controls. CITES trade data constitute one of the most comprehensive sets of data on species in trade and can help to indicate instances of illegal trade which may, in turn, be used to trace illegal logging.

Listing of these three species in Appendix II will give added impetus to the range States to conduct Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs) to ensure the sustainability of the trade and increase revenue from legal trade.

Non-Detriment Findings (NDFs)

---

[5] *COP17 Prop. 56 section 9.4*

[6] *http://tropix.cirad.fr/en*

[7] *http://insidewood.lib.ncsu.edu/search;jsessionid=F8500C7222C1BF2D4B195F08351DD4E6?0*

[8] *Nomenclature of timbers used in Europe; trilingual version 2003*

[9] *Timber and the twelfth meeting of the conference of the parties to CITES, Santiago, Chile 2002 – IUCN and TRAFFIC briefing document*

In order to grant an export permit for trade in specimens of species included in Appendix II (Article IV 2a), one of the requirements is that "a Scientific Authority of the State of export has advised that such export will not be detrimental to the survival of that species". This advice given by the Scientific Authority is what is called the Non-detriment Finding or NDF. NDFs include 'various concepts and non-binding guiding principles in considering whether trade would be detrimental to the survival of a species'[10], e.g. population demographics including distribution, management and harvesting/silvicultural practices, monitoring and trade chain traceability.

Useful sources, which could be considered by Scientific Authorities, when making NDF for trees, are 'IUCN guidance for Scientific Authorities', Resolution 16.7 and document AC26/PC20 Doc 8.4. A draft NDF Guide for timber species has been recently produced by BfN[4], and includes a nine-step process with important steps to evaluate harvest impacts and the effictiveness of management measures, and including also a table which timber specific information, condition and information quality is suggested for evaluation of timber harvest impacts.

The NDF process, including concise inventory data of standing stocks, can be used in the justification of developed quotas. Careful management of Appendix II listed species has the potential to maintain harvesting quotas over time, or even increase them, so that if a range State maintains significant stocks of a species with management protocols in place the state is supported in its legal and sustainable use of the timber. An example can be provided for DRC in the case of an increase in export quota for *Pericopsis elata* wood from 23,240 m^3 in 2015 to 49,749 m^3 for 2016[11].

International support

To support strengthened international controls of an Appendix II listing, a number of support activities can be designed and implemented to effectively facilitate sustainable harvesting and trade of the species. Activities can be developed to provide further information on species management, capacity building, trade research, and international cooperation. More specifically, international support can be sought to assist with:

Species assessment:

- Red List assessments for Bubinga species to ascertain population sizes and threats

Species management:

- Appropriate management actions:
    - Support for conducting Non-detriment findings (NDFs) using the NDF Guide for Timber
    - Support for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) improvements including training courses for appropriate forestry staff
    - Support for establishing quotas
    - Ensure sufficient planting material for forest rehabilitation program through establishment of, for example, seed production areas (SPAs), clonal orchards, tissue culture techniques, wildings, etc.
    - Support for conducting more widespread inventories as appropriate

Capacity building:

- Enforcement training and other capacity building assistance in implementation of the CITES Appendix II listing, including the development of *Guibourtia* spp. identification guides and associated training (e.g. international timber identification training to be held in Germany in June 2017 and at which Bubinga range states could participate)
- Provision of training on Timber NDF guidelines to range State authorities.

Trade research:

- Further research within demand markets, particularly China and EU, in order to offer increased clarity on the international trade of Bubinga in consumer countries (including via DNA testing)
- Research on the domestic market to have a clear view of the volume in trade implied by the Bubinga species
- Improvement of national databases for reliable and accurate information on timber in trade internationally as well as at the local level (domestic market)
- Possible development a DNA database for the purposes of national management

[10] *See full text on Non-detriment Findings at Resolution Conf. 16.7: https://cites.org/eng/res/16/16-07.php*

[11] *Data extracted from www.speciesplus.net*

International cooperation:

- Collaboration and information sharing between range States' MAs and SAs as they face similar challenges and problems for the sustainable management and trade of the species
- Collaboration and information sharing between relevant timber trade agencies (including CITES MAs, Customs, forestry officials etc) to provide uniform understanding on Bubinga and other timber trade, including source country and demand-side measures, innovative approaches etc.

Examples of support mechanisms

Several examples of support provided to range States can be provided. Of particular note is the support provided by the ITTO-CITES project which is 'a multi-year collaborative project between ITTO and CITES, funded by the EU and several other ITTO donors ……. that provides specific assistance to countries throughout the tropics to design forest management plans, forest inventories, provide guidelines and case studies for making "Non Detriment Findings" (NDFs) for CITES listed tree species, and to develop and disseminate tools for timber identification.'[12] The ITTO-CITES project has, to date, provided significant financial and technical support to range states in relation to capacity building and management of *Pericopsis elata* (Afrormosia) found in Central Africa, *Swietenia macrophylla* (Bigleaf mahogany) found in Latin America, and *Gonystylus* spp. (Ramin) found in Asia[13].

Other documented support for implementation of CITES Appendix II listings has been provided by NGOs through funding from governments and Government Aid Agencies (GAAs) – such as support for capacity building activities in Madagascar related to *Dalbergia* spp[14].

The action plan for Malagasy ebonies (*Diospyros* spp.) and Malagasy palissanders and rosewoods (*Dalbergia* spp.)[15] adopted at CoP16 has resulted in support for the development of inventories and NDFs mechanisms by TRAFFIC and the World Bank; stockpile inventory and assessment by various international organisations; and enforcement assistance and reviews by CITES Secretariat and other organisations.

CITES and UNEP have a national legislation project established since 1992 to provide compliance and technical assistance process to priority countries, including range countries of Bubinga, to strengthen their legal frameworks for the effective implementation of CITES[16].

The CITES working group on neotropical tree species, which operated for a number of years, and evolved from the big leaf mahogany working group is a good example of coordination and support mechanism for a single species which evolved into something much larger, covering more species. There is now a move towards continuing the African tree species working group, which was first established after CoP16[17]. Once Bubinga is included in Appendix II, this working group could assist range states in effective implementation of CITES for these species.

---

[12] *http://www.itto.int/cites_programme/*

[13] *E.g. see ITTO project – Asian Workshop of the ITTO-CITES Project on Ensuring International Trade in CITES-listed Timber Species is Consistent with their Sustainable Management and Conservation: Gonystylus spp. (Ramin)*

[14] *http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/6/26/traffic-convenes-timber-identification-workshop-in-madagasca.html*

[15] *See COP17 Doc. 55.2 : Implementation of the Convention for trade in Malagasy ebonies (Diospyros spp. and palisanders and rosewoods (Dalbergia spp.).*

[16] *See Status of legislative progress for implementing CITES found at: https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-22-A3-R1.pdf*

[17] *See COP17 Doc. 77: INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN AFRICAN TREE SPECIES found at: https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-77.pdf*