

Relevance of recent CITES developments to timber trade in Tanzania

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The Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), regarded as one of the most important international wildlife conservation tools, recently completed the twelfth Conference of the Parties. Members from 160 nations debated and witnessed a genuine maturing of the convention, with changed emphasis and broadened reach. Whilst many decisions and resolutions arose from CITES CoP12, a much clearer role for CITES is being defined in regulating timber trade. This has future implications for future timber trade regulation in Tanzania.

Before November 2002, CITES was mainly concerned with the export and exploitation of rare plants and animals such as marine turtles, rhinos, elephants, orchids and whales. Relatively few tree species are listed on the CITES Appendices. The convention was strongly biased towards international trade that threatens species' survival but not necessarily trades that are significant in economic terms. For this reason, CITES has often been misrepresented as a protectionist instrument focussed only on endangered species. This has in turn resulted in arguments against CITES regulation of large-scale commercial regimes, particularly timber and fisheries.

Following discussion of 54 species-listing proposals and dozens of other documents during 3-15 November 2002 in Santiago,

Chile, the 1,200 participants witnessed a genuine change in mood in the Convention particularly in light of global trends in illegal logging and declining fisheries. CITES may be moving to fill the gap. The decisions at CoP12 should be interpreted as an acceptance of CITES not only by countries wanting to protect their natural heritage, but also an acknowledgement by trading states that CITES can enhance the sustainability of supply for important wildlife products.

National governments and bodies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have traditionally regulated timber trade. The agreement and corresponding decisions to engage CITES in large-scale commercial forestry was based on a growing understanding amongst the global community regarding the potential role CITES can play, reflecting a number shifts in opinion since CITES started in 1973. It reflects growing realisation that CITES can work as a complimentary, rather than conflicting, management mechanism to assist the work of regional bodies such as FAO and others. It reflects the growing emphasis for synergies between conventions and agreements to achieve mutual conservation and sustainable use goals. It reflects the greater understanding that CITES can be an appropriate regulatory mechanism to assist national initiatives in managing trade in different contexts. It also reflects the acceptance that CITES can protect

livelihoods, not destroy them.

These developments were underlined by the listing of the South American hardwood Big-leaf Mahogany *Swietenia macrophylla* on CITES Appendix II, marking a real watershed for CITES. Contrary to popular belief, such a listing does not mean that the species is endangered or that trade will stop, but rather that international action is being taken to reduce over-harvesting and illegal logging. An Appendix II listing requires exporting nations to issue CITES export



permits with every consignment, based upon prior scientific evidence showing that the trade is not detrimental to the species' survival. Despite previous opposition spanning some ten years, countries recognized that the listing of timber on CITES can be beneficial to legal trade and rational use of the resource.

It is evident that the forestry sector is going to be more influenced by CITES in the future than ever before. This scenario presents two major implications. Firstly, whilst *Swietenia macrophylla* is not found in Tanzania, it is likely that the trade in other timber species would similarly benefit from CITES controls in the future, perhaps including species occurring in Tanzania. Perhaps in the future other countries will propose the CITES-listing of timber species also occurring in Tanzania. Alternatively, the Government of Tanzania itself may chose to propose the listing of indigenous species on CITES to enable international assistance in managing export levels. Secondly, since forestry is likely to become more important within the CITES arena over forthcoming years, there will be a growing need to enhance CITES capacity within this

sector in Tanzania. CITES transactions in Tanzania are currently dominated by the wildlife sector, especially sport hunting trophies and live animal exports. Consequently, the designated CITES Management (Wildlife Division) and Scientific Authorities (Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute) are both wildlife orientated. With the growing realisation that international trade in timber species will benefit from CITES controls in the future, it will be beneficial to increase CITES capacity within the forestry sector as well as strengthen institutional arrangements between the forestry sector and existing CITES Authorities in Tanzania.

Copies of documents and reports concerning CITES CoP12 and wildlife trade in general can be obtained by contacting

TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa

Email: traffictz@raha.com

Tel: (255 22) 2701676.

More information may also be obtained from the websites www.cites.org and www.traffic.org

Plant species listed on CITES Appendix I that are found in Tanzania



Encaphalartos sp.



Aloe sp.



Prunus africana