

Ruminating on ramin

Tri-national workshop on trade in the commercial timber species, ramin (*Gonystylus* spp)

15–16 April 2004

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The primary purpose of this workshop, which involved Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, was to consider the preliminary results of a project implemented by TRAFFIC Southeast Asia on the trade in the commercial timber species, ramin (*Gonystylus* spp). This project undertook an assessment of the efficacy of the listing of the species under Appendix III of the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), including an analysis of the effectiveness of implementation measures undertaken in the three participating countries. The workshop also considered the findings of national workshops on the same theme held earlier in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Events leading to the listing of *Gonystylus* spp in Appendix III of CITES underscore the need for rebuilding goodwill, confidence and trust, particularly between Indonesia and Malaysia

The outcomes of the workshop are reported here in some detail in light of Indonesia's proposal to uplist ramin to the CITES Appendix II at the 13th Conference of the Parties to CITES, which was taking place in Bangkok, Thailand, as this edition went to press. The results of the COP will be reported in the next edition.

The first-ever attempt to propose the inclusion of ramin in the appendices of CITES was made by the Netherlands, a non-range state, during the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) held in Kyoto in 1992. Specifically, the proposal called for the inclusion of *Gonystylus bancanus* in Appendix II of CITES; however, it was rejected at the ninth COP held in Fort Lauderdale following opposition mounted by the range states, including Indonesia and Malaysia.

Concerned with the considerable decline in the Indonesian population of ramin exacerbated by rampant illegal logging, Indonesia unilaterally included *Gonystylus* spp in Appendix III of CITES in April 2001.

Malaysia expressed opposition to Indonesia's listing on the grounds that no prior consultation had been undertaken with other range states and that, consequently, the mechanism needed to ensure effective control had yet to be established. Accordingly, Malaysia requested Indonesia to consider postponing the entry into force of the notification, but the request was turned down as Indonesia considered that postponement would create confusion and indicate inconsistency on its part.

Workshop proceedings

The program for the first day of the two-day tri-national workshop commenced with a welcoming address by TRAFFIC and opening addresses by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. These were followed by a series of presentations and discussions on topics that included the ecology and status of ramin, experiences under the Appendix-III listing, CITES procedures, and the ramin trade. The second day was devoted to a facilitated discussion of the problem tree with a view to generating a solution tree. The workshop ended after the conclusions and recommendations were summarised and closing remarks made.

Most of the problems encountered in implementing the listing of *Gonystylus* spp in Appendix III of CITES have stemmed from a lack of understanding and familiarity with CITES procedures, particularly in respect to transshipment. In this regard, the explanation given by the CITES Secretariat regarding trade in Appendix-III specimens was very useful. The need for capacity-building to properly enforce the CITES provisions was emphasised.

On the ecological status of *Gonystylus* spp, it was noted that among the 30 species identified, *Gonystylus bancanus* was subject to the most consistent demand and extraction. However, the listing in Appendix III made by Indonesia is applied at the genus level and therefore covers all the species in the genus.

Regarding implementation in Indonesia, the listing of *Gonystylus* spp was driven by concern about the rapid decline in the population of the genus caused principally by rampant illegal logging. Although conceding that illegal logging was partly a domestic problem, Indonesia was of the view that international demand and trade were also triggers for such activities. As CITES was an instrument governing international trade of listed species, Indonesia considered the listing of *Gonystylus* spp in Appendix III of CITES to be an appropriate measure. Since the implementation of the listing was being hampered by problems related to a lack of understanding and familiarity with CITES procedures, inter-agency coordination and species identification, the workshop was informed that Indonesia was considering proposing the uplisting of *Gonystylus* spp into Appendix II of CITES, under which a 'non-detriment finding' (NDF) would be required for exports of the genus (Indonesia did indeed propose this uplisting, and the proposal will be considered at the 13th COP). Moreover, in acknowledging that the problem of illegal logging in Indonesia was pervasive and covered other species as well, Indonesia was also contemplating proposing the listing of merbau in the appropriate appendix of CITES.

In Malaysia, problems related to a lack of understanding and familiarity with CITES procedures, inter-agency coordination and species identification had also been encountered. Other factors affecting implementation include the long common border with Indonesia, which makes effective enforcement a challenging task; the false declaration of the country of origin of cargoes; discrepancies between the harmonised-system (HS) codes used in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore; the capacity of customs in species identification; consignments of ramin logs and sawn timber entering Malaysia through the free commercial zones and barter trade zones; and the Barter Trade Agreement between Indonesia and Malaysia, which does not require the presentation of documents from the exporting country. The workshop was informed of the rationale for Malaysia's reservation on the listing of *Gonystylus* spp in Appendix III of CITES and measures being undertaken to plug the loophole with regards to transshipments involving the free commercial zones. Malaysia also called for greater cooperation

with Indonesia in monitoring the sizeable volumes of sawn timber entering Malaysia under the Barter Trade Agreement. Malaysia further informed the workshop that the uplisting of *Gonystylus* spp to Appendix II of CITES might not be a solution if the current problems of implementation were not addressed and resolved.

As an entrepôt, Singapore informed the workshop of measures undertaken to check on ramin under transshipment, although the Singapore Endangered Species Act did not provide for inspection inside free trade zones. Singapore was also monitoring the stockpile of ramin imported prior to the entry into force of the listing by Indonesia. The workshop noted the bilateral arrangement between Indonesia and Singapore, under which Singapore does not release statistics on imports from Indonesia.

Workshop recommendations

Given the circumstances leading to the convening of the workshop, the process of reaching agreement on its recommendations during the second day was protracted. Based on the outcomes of the national workshops held earlier in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the discussions held during the course of this workshop, tentative agreement was reached on the following five specific measures:

- improve existing mechanisms for the rapid exchange of information on interdiction of infractions involving trade in ramin;
- disseminate information on all national export and re-export requirements for the export of ramin to the three participating countries;
- harmonise custom codes on ramin cargoes and products;
- clarify statistical data discrepancies through consultation between CITES management authorities and the customs departments of the three countries; and
- create a tri-national task force on CITES ramin trade law enforcement to help resolve illegal trade and to frame long-term cooperative action.

Observations

CITES is an intergovernmental treaty governing the international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora. It is therefore rather remarkable that a non-governmental organisation, TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, has taken the initiative to bring the three governments together on the ramin issue. The fact that TRAFFIC managed to convene the workshop at all is an achievement in itself, but the effectiveness of the initiative in actually addressing and overcoming the problems of implementation remains to be seen. The tentative nature of the recommendations of the workshop is an indication of this uncertainty.

Events leading to the listing of *Gonystylus* spp in Appendix III of CITES underscore the need for rebuilding goodwill, confidence and trust, particularly between Indonesia and Malaysia. It will be interesting to see

whether the decision of Indonesia to formally submit a proposal for the uplisting of *Gonystylus* spp to Appendix II of CITES, and the possible proposal to list *Intsia palembanica* (merbau) in one of the CITES appendices, will contribute to this end.

Reported by Amha bin Buang, ITTO Secretariat

Certification effects

The effects of forest certification in developing countries and emerging economies: a symposium

10–14 June 2004

New Haven, Connecticut, USA

This collaborative symposium organised by the Yale Program on Forest Certification in collaboration with a range of partners, including ITTO, explored the social, ecological and economic effects of forest certification in developing and transitioning societies.

Over 100 experts from 36 countries attended to hear results from 16 country-level case-studies in four regions (Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa), followed by an analysis by two commentators and an open discussion. The event drew a diverse group including practitioners, donor-agency representatives, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the academic community and the private sector. The presentations provided a valuable opportunity to compare the forest certification experiences of different countries and regions and to identify areas for further research.

To complement case-study presentations, an NGO, Forests Trends, organised a panel on crosscutting themes that discussed local land rights, traditional land-use, local economies, and governance.

Following the symposium, the case-study researchers, editors and commentators participated in a two-day workshop to revise the case-studies and incorporate comments received throughout the symposium. Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Press intends to publish a book presenting the case-studies as well as regional and overarching themes.

For more information, including presentations and the texts of many of the case-studies, go to the symposium's website, www.yale.edu/forestcertification/symposium

CITES update: ramin listed on Appendix II

As this edition went to press, the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) agreed to include ramin on CITES Appendix II. The listing proposal submitted by the Government of Indonesia forms the basis for the listing, which includes all species in the *Gonostylus* genus, and all products of ramin wood. The COP was meeting in Bangkok, Thailand on 2–14 October 2004. For more information see www.cites.org