

CITES CoP20 Highlights: Wednesday, 26 November 2025

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) Committees at the twentieth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP20) continued to meet in two parallel sessions throughout the day. Committee I considered proposals to amend the Appendices of the convention, focusing on several tree species, while Committee II tackled matters relating to the gender action plan, engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, livelihoods, and elephant conservation and trade, among others.

Committee I

Appendices of the Convention

Considering the ‘look-alike’ criterion Annex 2B A of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II: Committee I re-opened deliberations on [CoP20 Doc.102](#).

The UK and EU confirmed that no compromise had been reached overnight. COLOMBIA, on behalf of several parties and supported by JAPAN, GABON, NEW ZEALAND, and others, proposed additional amendments to the original UK formulation, notably to use “assessment” rather than “study.” Following significant discussion on voting procedure, Committee I proceeded to two votes: on the proposal from the Chair, as amended by the EU; and on the proposal from the UK, as amended by Colombia.

The first proposal failed to meet the required two-thirds majority with 59 supporting, 63 opposing, and 6 abstaining. The second proposal was also rejected with 79 supporting, 40 opposing, and 10 abstaining.

Committee I did not reach agreement on the document.

Nomenclature matters: Higher taxon listings in the appendices: Committee I Chair Mathias Lörtscher (Switzerland) introduced [CoP20 Doc. 112](#). The Nomenclature Specialist of the Animals Committee and the Chair specified that the proposed amendment was purely procedural, and would not necessarily force any changes towards taxon or species listings.

Committee I approved the document.

Species Conservation and Trade

Assessment of Appendix I-listed species: Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc.71](#), which Committee I approved.

Proposals to Amend the Appendices I and II

***Paubrasilia echinata*:** BRAZIL introduced Prop. 46, on Brazilwood (*Paubrasilia echinata*), which proposes transferring the species from Appendix II to Appendix I.

ARGENTINA, CHINA, INDIA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, INDONESIA, and many others expressed support. Recognizing both the legitimacy of Brazil’s concern and the importance of travel for musical instruments, the EU, supported by the UK, CANADA, and JAPAN, proposed an in-session working group to consider stronger protections for Brazilwood without unintended or burdensome side effects. The INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF VIOLIN AND BOW MAKERS noted his organization’s current work with Brazil on conservation, as well as the potentially devastating effects of an Appendix I listing on bow making. TRAFFIC highlighted the continued illegal trade of bows and the need for more specific traceability systems.

After establishing further topics for discussion from the EU, Brazil, and the US, Chair Lörtscher introduced [CoP20 Doc. 97](#) on Brazil wood (*Paubrasilia echinata*). He then struck a party-only working group to consider Proposition 46, CoP20 Doc.97, Inf.Doc.46, and session discussions, and prepare an in-session document recommending the way forward. The UK, US, and EU raised concerns about the working group being limited to parties, but were opposed by BRAZIL. CANADA will chair the working group.

***Commiphora wightii*:** The EU introduced CoP20 Prop.43 to include guggul (*C. wightii*) in Appendix II.

INDIA, supported by CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, CONGO, CAMEROON, and others, objected, arguing that an updated and comprehensive population assessment is needed before further consideration of listing. PAKISTAN supported the proposal, citing the decline in its wild population due to overharvesting and increasing international demand. OMAN, supported by UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE), SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN, and others, said that the species is not currently under threat in Oman and that listing is unnecessary. CHINA expressed concern that the proposal would lead to the disruption of other legal and sustainable trade in resin. ESWATINI urged range states to implement domestic conservation measures and recommended against the listing. The UK suggested the use of an annotation to exclude some types of finished products. CANADA inquired whether an annotation would make the listing acceptable to all range states. The EU, opposed by INDIA and OMAN, suggested striking a working group to draft an annotation.

After a vote yielding 69 in favor, 42 against, and 17 abstentions, Committee I did not adopt the proposal.

***Afzelia bipindensis*:** CONGO introduced CoP20 Prop.45 to delete the red doussié (*A. bipindensis*) populations of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon from Appendix II.

INDIA, CAMEROON, BURUNDI, TANZANIA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, and others supported the proposal, while the EU, US, UK, and CANADA opposed, with the latter group arguing that the species still meets the look-alike criterion and lacks robust traceability.

The proposition was put to a vote and ultimately rejected, with 49 in favor, 56 against, and 24 abstentions.

Pterocarpus soyauxii: GABON introduced CoP20 Prop.47 to delete the African padauk (*P. soyauxii*) populations of Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon from Appendix II. CONGO, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, and CAMEROON, supported by COTE D'IVOIRE, INDIA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, and others, pointed to the robust central African populations, sustainable management practices in the proponent states, and improvement in identification technologies as justification for the deletion. The EU, KENYA, and UK opposed the proposal given the look-alike criteria, potential enforcement challenges with a split listing, and accessibility issues with identification technologies. The US opposed the proposal given the lack of species-specific data.

Committee I did not adopt the proposal, with 51 in favor, 57 against, and 20 abstentions.

Podocarpus parlatorei: ARGENTINA introduced CoP20 Prop.49 on the transfer of parlatore's podocarp (*P. parlatorei*) from Appendix I to Appendix II, proposed an amendment to include a zero export quota and highlighted consultation with other range states.

BRAZIL and MEXICO supported the proposal as amended. The US said the proposal did not follow the periodic review process and lacked scientific justification given information gaps on the Bolivian population. BOLIVIA, noting regional support for the proposal, emphasized that adding a zero-export quota would allow for time to undertake population studies. TRAFFIC, on behalf of International Union for Conservation of Nature, supported the amendment in line with the precautionary principle.

Following a vote, Committee I did not adopt the proposal, with 69 in favor, 38 against, and 18 abstentions.

***Panax quinquefolius* (American ginseng)**: The US introduced CoP20 Prop.40 to amend an annotation to exclude finished products of sliced roots from artificially propagated plants.

CANADA, INDONESIA, and the EU opposed, noting that the amendment could lead to possible laundering.

Committee I rejected the proposal.

Committee II

Strategic Matters

CITES gender action plan: Committee II Chair Anna Wong (Singapore) introduced [CoP20 Doc.25](#) to renew Decisions 19.51 and 19.53 and revise Decision 19.52 regarding the draft CITES gender action plan.

CANADA, UK, EU, BRAZIL, and others supported the document while the US, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, IRAN, INDONESIA, and others opposed.

Chair Wong proposed to accept the document and work on the amendments to the decisions in the intersessional period. The US called for a vote to delete the decisions instead.

After a vote with 53 agreeing, 22 disagreeing, and 11 abstaining, the document and its recommendations were accepted.

Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP): Chair Wong recalled that Committee II agreed to wait for the decision regarding the CITES gender action plan before continuing discussions on the CAP.

The US, supported by INDONESIA, KUWAIT, and others, proposed new language to support consideration of “the particular needs of women and men.” The EU, AUSTRALIA, FIJI, and others opposed, preferring to retain the original language. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by UNITED ARAB EMIRATES and IRAN, proposed a compromise text, which was not accepted by the US. The US called for a vote to delete this text in 20.BB b.

With 63 agreeing, 14 disagreeing, and 8 abstaining, Committee II agreed to the original language and accepted [CoP20 Doc.21](#).

Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities: Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.27](#).

On terminology, CANADA, supported by KENYA, NEW ZEALAND, and others, stressed that Indigenous Peoples should be considered as distinct and separate from local communities. INDONESIA, with BRAZIL, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, CHINA, and others opposed, preferring to keep the current language in the document. LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC proposed deleting reference to local communities, noting that their domestic laws do not recognize any local communities. CANADA proposed a compromise to wait for the glossary being worked on by the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD's) Permanent Body on 8(j) before discussions continue. Committee II agreed.

On the non-binding “Guidance on consulting indigenous peoples and local communities on proposals to amend the Appendices,” the EU, BOTSWANA, INDIA, and others supported the adoption and publication on the CITES website. NGĀ IWI O TARANAKI called on CITES to recognize and include Indigenous voices in workstreams and decisions “pertaining to us, about our cultural traditions.” RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted that the non-binding Guidance should be reconsidered to allow for feedback before publication. The US opposed its publication and called for a vote.

With 78 in favor, 9 against, and 4 abstaining, Committee II agreed to the publication of the non-binding Guidance. On the draft decisions, CANADA proposed changing the language to invite parties to “consider using” rather than “use” the non-binding Guidance.

Committee II agreed to the draft decision as amended.

Draft resolution on the creation of an advisory Subcommittee of the Standing Committee of People Living alongside Fauna and Flora species included in the CITES Appendices (PLFF), a related Voluntary Fund, and their procedures: ZIMBABWE introduced [CoP20 Doc.28](#).

Many parties expressed sympathy for rural communities living alongside wildlife, and in principle supported their participation in CITES, but strongly opposed the proposed establishment of a dedicated subcommittee, citing concerns with its potential financial and operative implications. Noting a duplication of efforts with [CoP20 Doc.27](#) on engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, CANADA suggested incorporating Doc.28 into Doc.27 by directing the Standing Committee (SC) to continue this work intersessionally.

Committee II rejected the proposed resolution in Doc.28, but agreed to make minor amendments to Doc. 27 in order to take the work forward intersessionally.

Livelihoods: Chair Wong noted that [CoP20 Doc.29.1](#), the report of the SC, and [CoP20 Doc.29.2](#), submitted by Zambia, would be considered together. ZAMBIA introduced [CoP20 Doc.29.2](#) with proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 16.6 (Rev. CoP18) on CITES and livelihoods, including the addition of text inviting parties to make use of the six strategies highlighted in a new “Guidance for facilitating the participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in legal and sustainable trade in CITES-listed species.”

BOTSWANA, JAPAN, TANZANIA, NAMIBIA, MALAWI, and others supported the document put forward by Zambia. The US, EU, INDIA, UK, BENIN, KENYA, and others opposed, with the EU noting that they could not “support a Guidance on how to enhance trade in endangered species.” Zambia stressed that the Guidance is non-binding. CANADA, with mixed support, suggested establishing a working group to reconcile CoP20 Docs.29.1 and 29.2.

Discussions on Doc.29.2 were put on hold so Committee II could review the draft decisions on livelihoods in Annex 3 to CoP20 Doc.29.1.

The US opposed those draft decisions in Doc.29.2 pertaining to: national participatory policies recognizing the rights of Indigenous and local communities to either own or access and manage wildlife resources; a technical workshop to review case studies on the use of the certification and labelling systems for products from Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and an intersessional working group on livelihoods.

BORN FREE FOUNDATION, on behalf of 13 observer organizations, said the Guidance amounted to “trade promotion” and urged parties to reject both documents. SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL asserted that encouraging positive conservation outcomes through sustainable international trade was within the scope of the Convention. INSTITUTO BALEIA JUBARTE, on behalf of several organizations, expressed concern that CITES was ignoring the existence of millions of non-extractive users of wild flora and fauna who depend on these species for their livelihoods.

Chair Wong ruled in favour of deleting the draft decisions as suggested by the US and closing the debate on the draft decisions. ZAMBIA opposed the Chair’s ruling and requested two votes: one procedural to reopen the Chair’s ruling, and one substantive to retain the draft decision directing the SC to establish an intersessional working group on livelihoods.

With 32 in favour, 49 against, and 10 abstaining, the Chair’s ruling stood by simple majority.

With 33 in favour, 47 against, and 15 abstaining, the proposal to retain a draft decision on an intersessional working group was rejected.

As a compromise, CANADA offered to draft a new draft decision inviting further review of the six strategies provided in the Guidance in CoP20 Doc.29.2. SENEGAL, the US, and the EU opposed, noting that this issue had been discussed over the past three CoPs. Other parties expressed support.

Further discussion of this agenda item was adjourned until Canada could prepare an in-session document.

Integrating human rights, livelihoods, and food security into the implementation of CITES: ZIMBABWE introduced [CoP20 Doc.30](#), recommending, *inter alia*, that parties undertake socio-economic impact assessments where appropriate, and for the SC to consider the establishment of a working group to explore mechanisms to operationalize human rights-based approaches within CITES.

BOTSWANA, ZAMBIA, and TANZANIA supported the document while SENEGAL, US, KENYA, SUDAN, and many others opposed, noting that this would be beyond the mandate of the Convention.

Committee II did not accept the proposed resolution in the document.

Report on Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE): The Secretariat introduced [CoP20 Doc.76.4](#), calling on the parties to take note of the document.

Many parties commended the Secretariat for their efforts. UGANDA, SENEGAL, and others noted that data gaps continue to exist and not all elephant sites are recognized. INDIA and KENYA proposed distinguishing human-elephant conflict-related deaths from the illegal killing of elephants.

Committee II noted the document.

Report on the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS): Chair Wong introduced [CoP20 Doc.76.5](#), prepared by the Secretariat with analysis and interpretation coordinated by TRAFFIC.

MALAYSIA, CHINA, SINGAPORE, and others expressed concerns on the methodology under the National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) identification. UAE, supported by KUWAIT, QATAR, and others, proposed several textual amendments to improve data validation processes. The EU, with the US, opposed, noting that the issue of data validation should be addressed under [CoP20 Doc.42](#). The UK, with KENYA, noted the value added by the network analysis to complement cluster analysis, and proposed an amendment to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP19). SENEGAL proposed drafting a new decision to integrate network analysis within the NIAP process. TRAFFIC expressed their willingness to work with parties to improve the methodology and subject it to a peer-review process.

Committee II agreed to establish a working group, chaired by Singapore, to work on the proposed amendments from UAE, Senegal, and the UK.

In the Corridors

With clearer skies and minds, delegates headed to committee meetings on Wednesday in high spirits to continue tackling the dense agenda for the day. This energy was quickly dissipated by tense discussions. With both committees holding voting procedures early in the morning, a frustrated energy took hold of the venue, with delegates seeking clarification on what they were voting for and how. One committee held three votes in three hours; another took a vote after almost two hours of deliberation. One delegate was overheard asking: “Aren’t we supposed to be consensus based?” Yet another sighed: “We have to move forward somehow.”

Observers shared the delegates’ frustration at the perceived slog of voting procedures on substantial and procedural matters that took up most of the afternoon. “We’ll never finish on time,” worried one seasoned observer. Another urged calm: “This is due procedure, and it’s early still. Let’s just hope for the best.”

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