



## International Protections Bring Good News for Threatened Rosewoods *CITES Victory Shifts International Spotlight to Policymakers in China*

30 September 2016 | JOHANNESBURG | Countries meeting at the [17th Conference of Parties \(COP\)](#) of CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, won a huge victory for the world's most threatened forests yesterday by significantly expanding protections for rosewood species.

In a historic move, countries adopted five separate proposals that grant more stringent protection under CITES to hundreds of tree species targeted by illegal logging and trade. The measures include protection across national borders for all species within the *Dalbergia* genus which includes approximately 250 species native to tropical forests, and more than 300 species worldwide.

"These new CITES protections are tremendous news, especially for Southeast Asia and increasingly, West Africa, where growing consumer demand has led to a precipitous increase in illegal harvesting of precious wood species," said Naomi Basik Treanor, Manager of the Forest Policy, Trade, and Finance program at Forest Trends. "Rosewood logging is illegal according to national laws and regulations in many countries where these species are found. This action therefore deals a major blow to a booming illicit trade."

Trade in precious hardwood species, including rosewood – largely to satisfy demand for [classical-style furniture in China](#) – poses an increasing threat to tropical forests. Traditionally, most Chinese imports of rosewood have come from Southeast Asia, but in recent years traders are turning to West Africa to help satisfy booming consumer demand. From 2010 to 2014, China's rosewood imports from Africa jumped 700 percent, and in the first half of 2016 alone, nearly US\$216 million worth of West African rosewood was imported into China.

Rosewood forests deliver critical climate and livelihood benefits to communities, reduce water stress, and support sensitive ecosystem. The booming trade in these wood species also undermines nations' security, fuels ongoing intrastate conflict, and jeopardizes communities' ability to adapt to climate change.

While this week's developments at CITES represent a huge step toward curbing the rapid loss of forests in Africa and Asia, species-based protections alone can't solve the problem. One of the biggest challenges in protecting these threatened forests has been the fact that the term "rosewood" refers to a broad category of red-hued woods, rather than a single species. In China, for example, the class of precious redwoods officially known as *hongmu* includes 33 tree species. No single CITES action can protect all rosewood species; rather, countries are tasked with the arduous work of protecting trees on a case-by-case basis, all while trying to keep pace with opportunistic illegal traders who move swiftly from species to species and country to country.

"As a species-focused mechanism, CITES alone isn't equipped to protect critically threatened forests from illegal logging as a whole; it's up to consumer countries to adopt broader policy solutions that tackle the problem at its root – demand," said Kerstin Canby, Director of the Forest Policy, Trade, and Finance program.

"As the world's largest consumer of rosewood, China holds the key to preventing the loss of the last remaining old-growth forests in Africa and Southeast Asia," Canby continued. "Requiring that all wood products be legally and sustainably sourced – rather than only certain listed species – is a proven approach that's already getting illegal wood off of markets in the US, EU, and Australia. We urge the Chinese government to match the example set by those countries with strong policy measures of its own."

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