



**eCITES: The equivalent of physical
signatures and seals in electronic
CITES permits**

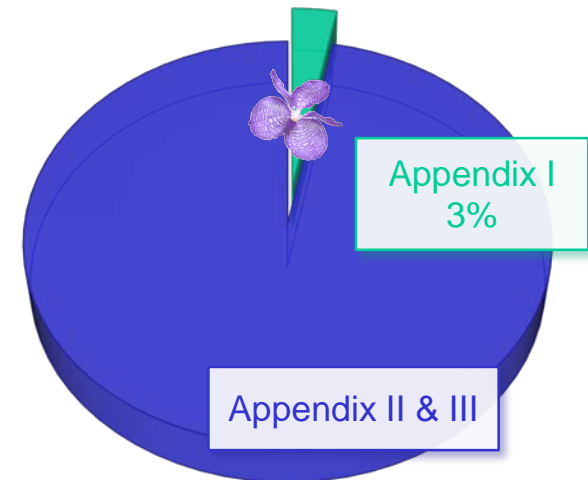
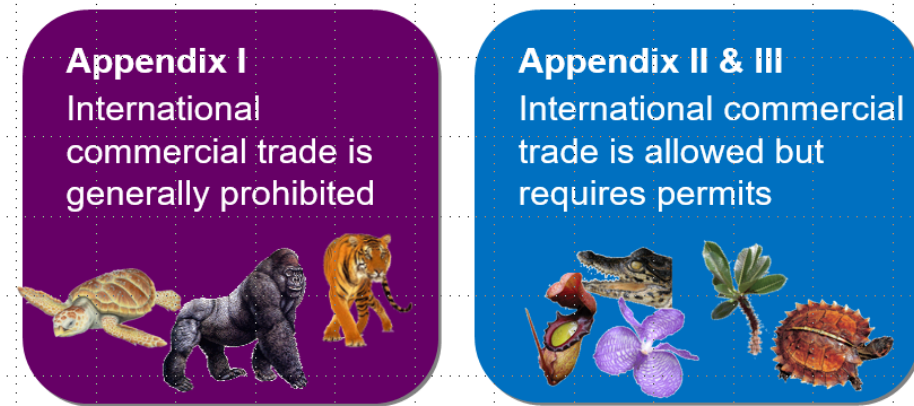
Who we are

- ❑ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- ❑ Multilateral agreement which addresses important aspects for
- ❑ .. sustainable trade in wildlife based on
- ❑ ..the exchange of a permit which ...
- ❑ .. documents the legality of the trade transaction
- ❑ Legally binding instrument for 183 Parties (countries)



CITES enables trade

- ❑ Over 36,000 species regulated by CITES
- ❑ Vast majority (97%) of CITES species can be commercially traded
- ❑ Timber, fish, ornamental & medicinal plants, leather, luxury products, cosmetics,...
- ❑ Collected from the wild, farmed, nurseries, fisheries,...
- ❑ Over 950,000 CITES permits issued per year
- ❑ ..controlling multi billion dollar trade



Illegal trade in wildlife: a fast growing business

Number of pangolins legally traded and seized contraband globally, aggregated 2007-2013

- ❑ Estimated at **USD 50 to 100 billion** per year
- ❑ Illegal trade in wildlife is now ranked **4th in transnational crime** (after drugs, human trafficking, counterfeit products)

Organised crime uses

- ❑ fraudulent paperwork
- ❑ launder illegal trade with legal trade

CITES efforts to automate permit processing and exchange electronic permit information (eCITES)

Vision: end to end regulatory control and transparency in the supply chain



Electronic CITES permits and standards

The implementation of the Convention is based on the permit process

CITES permits and processes are aligned to international trade standards and best practice

- ☐ Collaboration with UN/CEFACT and other relevant standard settings organizations
- ☐ CITES paper Permit aligned to the UN Layout Key
- ☐ CITES electronic Permit based on UN/CEFACT eCert standard with mapping to WCO Data Model
- ☐ Both use the relevant international recommendations on use of codes in trade documents
- ☐ Work on cross border exchange of permits in consultation with WTO ePhyto project
- ☐ CITES traceability is currently developed in consultation with UN/CEFACT agriculture WG to ensure compatibility between CITES permit and tractability information



Signatures and seals in CITES permits

A CITES permit documents the legality of a trade transaction

A CITES permit **MUST** contain

- ☐ Name and handwritten signature of the applicant
- ☐ Seal of the issuing Management Authority
- ☐ Name and handwritten signature of the issuing official
- ☐ Seal or stamp of the Customs office
- ☐ Name and handwritten signature of the Customs official
- ☐ Convention states the equivalence of paper and electronic permits*
- ☐ Requires the **electronic equivalence of the physical signatures and seals** in electronic permits:

The image shows a sample CITES permit form (PERMISO/CERTIFICADO N° 11474) for the export of CITES-listed species. The form is divided into several sections:

- Header:** Includes the CITES logo, the title "CONVENCIÓN SOBRE EL COMERCIO INTERNACIONAL DE ESPECIES AMENAZADAS DE FAUNA Y FLORA SILVESTRES", and the permit number "11474".
- Section 1:** Information about the applicant (BTP INC) and the issuing authority (Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales - INRENA).
- Section 2:** Information about the species being exported, including the origin (ESTADOS UNIDOS), the quantity (1 168 partes), and the destination (LIMA - PERU).
- Section 3:** A table for the species being exported, with columns for origin, quantity, and destination.
- Section 4:** Information about the customs official and the date of issuance (09/12/2008).
- Section 5:** A table for the species being exported, with columns for origin, quantity, and destination.

The form is signed by the issuing official (ING. IRMA BRIGERO SANCHEZ) and the customs official (ING. IRMA BRIGERO SANCHEZ), and includes the official seals of the INRENA and the customs office.

*"The name of the signatory and his/her handwritten signature for paper permits and certificates or **its electronic equivalent for electronic permits and certificates**"*

What is the electronic equivalent of a seal?

Initial thoughts: digital signature

- ☐ 1:1 equivalence
- ☐ Cryptography, safe, supports workflow, ..

However...

- ☐ Would require digital signature infrastructure in 183 countries
- ☐ Cross border recognition of digital signatures
- ☐ How to deal with change of responsibilities of officials, revocation of signatures, loss of passwords, ..?

➔ Digital signatures are not a solution for electronic CITES permit information exchanges

In 2017 the preparation for exchange of electronic CITES permits was progressing but the issue of the electronic equivalent of physical signatures was still looming



CITES approach to electronic signatures

Background paper to summarize issues and solutions

- ☐ Based on guidance of UNECE Recommendation 14
- ☐ Clarify difference between *electronic signature* and *digital signature*
- ☐ Outline that other systems such a password authentication and system logs can provide the equivalent of physical signatures
- ☐ Drafting of a proposal how to deal with electronic signatures in CITES permits

Discussion in the CITES WG on electronic Systems

- ☐ Presentation the CITES Working Group on electronic System and Information Technologies
- ☐ WG members held national consultation
- ☐ Broad support for the proposal

Proposal for the electronic equivalent of signatures in CITES permits

WG on electronic Systems proposes to the CITES Governing Bodies (SC and CoP) to

1. *RECOMEND that*

- ☐ *Parties should consider UN/CEFACT Recommendation 14 as best practice when dealing with signatures and seals in CITES permits*
- ☐ *Parties using electronic CITES permits should use username and password or similar systems to authenticate the access to the electronic CITES system*
- ☐ *Electronic CITES systems must keep audit trails on all activities*
- ☐ *Archives of the system activities must be kept for at least 5 years*

2. *Parties AGREE that in electronic CITES systems that meet above requirements the electronic equivalent of a physical signature and a seal is provided through the identification of the permit applicant, the identification of the official that issued or authorized the document and the identification of the issuing agency.*



Thank you!

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