

Dear colleagues,

I am delighted to be in Dar-es-Salaam today to address the CITES Tree Species Programme Regional Meeting for Africa.

After ten years of joint work under the ITTO-CITES Programme we have today CITES Tree Species Programme that continues the path of supporting Parties efforts to implement the Convention for a challenging group of species: the tree species.

Firstly, I would like to warmly thank the Government of Tanzania and its team for their generous invitation to host this meeting and all the hard work that has been put into the preparations.

The CITES Secretariat would like to thank the donors of this programme: the European Union that remains being the major contributor and the United States of America that has recently contributed with further funds that we need to decide with ITTO how best to invest.

Since July 2017, the CITES Tree Species Programme has worked incessantly to set up the structure of the programme and make effective progress towards and after the first call for project proposals that resulted in 68 proposals adding up to more than 14 million USD. We continue working closely with the colleagues of the ITTO Secretariat since the robust cooperation established during the years of the ITTO-CITES Programme endures.

As result of the call for proposals we will be possibly funding eighteen of them. As you all know, from February 2018 we worked with two evaluators who formulated recommendations to guide our work of revision of all proposals. It is crucial for all that the quality of each proposal is unquestionably and that donors do not have doubts on whether we should be funding them or not.

Over the last ten years the number of tree species included in CITES continues to increase drastically at every Conference of the Parties. We will see whether at the upcoming CoP18 this trend continues and in the meantime the CITES Secretariat, with the support of the ITTO Secretariat and other partners, will assist Parties to facilitate their work on tree species and strengthen their capacities in the long term.

This technical meeting has been organized to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions related to Appendix II for CITES tree listed species. During the five days in this meeting we will learn about how CITES works on tree species, we will receive latest updates on the CITES Tree Species Programme work, notably of the progress made in Africa; we will learn about regional tree species products trade patterns in this region and it will be with a lot of interest that we will listen to the presentations of Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, the Democratic republic of the Congo, and Côte d'Ivoire, that will explain to all of us how they have progressed in the work on their respective project proposals. Mr Jean Lagarde will provide reports on the overall progress made in the region, ITTO will present the progress made with the regional trade study and one full day will be dedicated to discuss two Decisions adopted at the last CITES conference of the Parties, that directed to continue the work on *Prunus africana* and *Osyris lanceolata*. During the last two days of this week we will split in working groups that will discuss more in depth the topics of non-detriment findings, marking, traceability, products identification and capacity building and Governance. The priority of this meeting is to make progress on coordination of future work and finalize those proposals that still need revisions. Finally, my colleague Martin Hitziger, who is taking the lead in the CITES Secretariat on medicinal plants work, has kindly agreed to organize a side event that will be fully dedicated to the subject of *Prunus africana* and livelihoods.

The findings and recommendations of this meeting should feed your work towards a robust implementation of your respective project proposals.

Thanks to the tremendous efforts and tireless support from the CITES Management Authority of Tanzania and especially of Mr Joseph Otieno and Ms Margareth Thadei, this meeting can be

conducted in the best of circumstances. I would like to congratulate them for the excellent arrangements made here at the Dar es Salaam Serena Hotel, and to thank them again on behalf of the CITES Secretariat team. I would also like to thank our colleagues Mr Steve Johnson and Ms Ishii Kanako, from the ITTO Secretariat, for leading the organization of this meeting, for liaising with Mr Jean Lagarde and colleagues from Tanzania while assisting many of you with the travel arrangements, for organizing the production of many materials that you will receive and for simply being a great team to work with. In this opportunity, we also have with us Mr Ian Thompson. Many of you will remember the great work he did providing the evaluations for your proposals and further recommendations to strengthen them and make them eligible for funding. He has been working these days with us to also assist Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo and Benin in finalizing their proposals. Finally, I would like to thank Ms Odile Faull and her team of interpretation for helping us all to ensure a clear dialogue. I feel privileged having the opportunity to work with such a great team, thanks to each of them I continue learning every day and that helps me tremendously to evolve and improve in my job.

My dream would be to have the CITES Tree Species Programme turned into a permanent programme hosted by the CITES Secretariat. Like the previous CITES Secretariat General said, ideally, that could be a CITES-ITTO Tree Species Programme. We have been discussing this idea and it would be useful to have your opinion about it during these days in Dar-es-Salaam.

I look forward to continue promoting, through our work, the sustainable use of forests worldwide.

I wish us all five very productive days and, thank you for the opportunity to address you.

Milena