

CIRCULAR

FILE: CONV 2/5/1 **TO:** SPREP National Focal Points
DATE: 5 May 2020
CIRCULAR: 20/39

SUBJECT: Electronic Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) permitting system

Dear National Focal Points and CITES Management and Scientific Authorities,

CITES is the global instrument for regulating international trade in wild plants and animals to ensure such trade does not threaten their survival. Member countries apply a common set of international rules for legal international trade in CITES-listed species using standardised permits and certificates. Countries cannot trade in the 35,000 CITES-listed species with CITES Parties unless they trade consistently with CITES requirements.

Parties to CITES must report all trade in CITES-listed species to the CITES Secretariat annually. 183 parties to CITES apply this system to make close to one million reported legal trade transactions in CITES-listed species every year.

The CITES Secretariat working with UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/Home.aspx>) have jointly developed a cloud-based CITES permit system offering automated support for permit application, processing, issuance and reporting.

The system is targeted at Parties who do not currently have electronic permit management systems particularly with low to medium permit volumes and may be particularly useful for developing countries. It is currently being trialed and implemented in Sri Lanka.

The potential advantages of establishing this system of permitting include:

- Countries can monitor and manage sustainable trade in wild plants and animals, providing long term economic development opportunities and supporting resilient ecosystems.
- Permit processes are automated, resulting in fewer errors and less training needed for staff.
- Wildlife trafficking, include opportunities for corruption and the use of fraudulent permits are reduced.

The electronic CITES system has been developed by the ASYCUDA programme of UNCTAD (Automated Customs Management System) and the new eCITES system is designed to connect to ASYCUDA, so data can be shared between permit issuing and border authorities, including ASYCUDA. Although not a pre-requisite it would be ideal for a country to already have ASYCUDA in place before implementing eCITES. For further information about eCITES refer to the attached pamphlet.

SPREP has funding to support implementation of eCITES in one Pacific Island country who is a Party to CITES. We do hope to get additional funding, but in the short term we must select one country to support this implementation.

SPREP in consultation with UNCTAD will develop a list of criteria on which to base the selection of the country to trial this system in the Pacific. To help us with this process please let us know if:

1. You are interested in participating in the selection process to have eCITES implemented in your country.
2. Do you already have ASYCUDA customs management system?

Please let Karen Baird at SPREP karenb@sprep.org know if you are interested in being part of the selection process. Once we have developed our criteria, we will be in touch to run an interview with key staff in the Management and Scientific Authorities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kosi Latu', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kosi Latu
Director General

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