

UNECE/UNESCAP Task Force on eCITES-EPIX Pilots

Wednesday, 6 July 2022, MS Teams session (11:00-12:00 AM CEST)

Minutes of the Meeting:

Item	Discussion	Action/Decision
1	<p>Welcome of Participants and adoption of the agenda (Switzerland)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair, Matthias Loertscher, Head of CITES MA Switzerland, opened the meeting and asked whether the agenda of the meeting was acceptable to the participants. 	→ The agenda was adopted
2	<p>Chair's takeaway from the 74th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee</p> <p>The Chair presented a document from the WG on Electronic systems and information technologies to the Standing Committee in which a range of changes to the resolution 12.3 on permits and certificates, as well as decisions to continue the working group's work on electronic permitting was proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several guidance documents, such as on CITES electronic signature are suggested to be formally embedded within the Resolution and also the parties are recommended to use these guidance documents when developing electronic permitting systems. • It is also suggested that the security stamp may be replaced with an equivalent, such as a 2-dimensional bar code. • It is also made clear that the parties that use and issue electronic permits ensure that their systems have security measures to make sure that documents cannot be falsified. • In relation to electronic permit exchange, the focus of discussions will be to see whether alternatives to the physical endorsement of a permit and certificate upon export can be found and accepted by the parties. • Further the Secretariat with support of the SC is tasked to support management authorities, especially those with the greatest needs to implement electronic permitting systems as well as support the work of the working group. • all these proposed changes to the resolution and the decisions will be forwarded by the Standing Committee to the next CITES Conference of Parties (CoP) that will take place in November this year. 	No questions from the floor
3	Discussion on the objective of the Task Force	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The representative from ECE read the following objective of the task force: The objective of the Task Force is to support interested Management Authorities (MAs) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other relevant national stakeholders of CITES Parties in initiating and carrying out pilot-based and/or live electronic exchanges of CITES permits among them, which may contribute to the prevention of fraudulent use of CITES permits, facilitate legal trade and improve CITES annual report preparation and submission. 	<p>No question or issue was raised.</p> <p>The chair declared that the objective was still valid.</p>
4	<p>Discussion on the best ways to receive information on actual quantities of exports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic needs to be discussed in the future. The endorsement of customs at Export is a challenge for electronic permitting systems and exchange of information. So how we can provide such information among CITES parties is an important issue. Switzerland has been thinking about using QR codes on the permit that would allow the importing party to check via the Swiss system when the goods have left the country and in what quantities. 	<p>Question: do we have any other cases or guidance for the exchanges of permits between countries, i.e. EPIX guidance?</p> <p>Answer by the chair: CITES has a Toolkit on electronic permitting which provides the basic recommendations. On the specific issue of EPIX, we do not have agreed guidance yet. But this is part of the discussions at the next Conference of Parties (CoP) in November and will be further discussed in the WG after COP19.</p> <p>Question: What other countries have already implemented e-permitting?</p> <p>Answer by CITES secretariat: The CITES secretariat provides on the CXITES website a specific page on e-permitting where all the information is published, including which parties already have implemented e-permitting systems.</p>
5	<p>Progress on UNCTAD eCITES solution implementation in other countries & territories: feasibility study in Mozambique (UNCTAD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The presentation is attached 	<p>Question: how many countries have been exchanging CITES permit electronically?</p> <p>Answer: A pilot project is ongoing between Switzerland and Sri Lanka and Norway and Switzerland are exchanging permits on a daily basis.</p> <p>Question: is the Cloud solution provided by private sector or managed by authorities?</p> <p>Answer: the cloud uses UNCTAD premises, not private or third party.</p>

6	<p>Update on recent developments (CITES, UNECE, UNESCAP and Participating Management Authorities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CITES: The eCITES Toolkit is current being revised and updated (version 3). The toolkit is the guidance for implementing e-permitting system. It includes the process description, the technical specifications, data exchange standards etc. Colleagues are invited to share any feedback on what should be integrated in the new version. The CITES Conference of Parties (CoP) will take place from 14-25 November in Panama city, Panama. The Standing Committee at SC74 decided to propose new decisions including one on risk analysis and cooperation between customs and MAs as well as with WCO. There will be a side event on e-permitting and digitalization of CITES processes including EPIX. Based on a request from Vanuatu, new activities may be organized to support eCITES implementation. Translation of EPIX guidelines to French and Spanish are being carried out. • ECE: 1) expressed gratitude to the former colleague, Mr. Markus Pikart, who retired in April 2022, for his great contributions, especially to this Task Force. 2) UN/CEFACT had just started a new project on Digitization Transit Accompanying Documents. 3) UN/CEFACT had a new project just approved on Product Conformity Certificate Exchange that would also cover agriculture documents (SPS etc.) • ESCAP: 1) the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific entered into force in February 2021. Seven countries have ratified it. There are room for collaboration between the task force and the implementation of Framework Agreement. 2) informed the meeting that Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2022 and capacity building events would be held from 29 August to 01 September 2022 in Singapore. 	
7	AOB & Next meeting	<p>ESCAP representative tentatively proposed that next meeting may be held in hybrid back-to-back with Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum. The chair mentioned to look into the proposal.¹</p>

¹ It was discovered later that this proposal is not feasible.

Annex1. List of Participants: 18 Participants

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Annex2. Agenda Items

1. Welcome of participants and adoption of the agenda
2. Chair's takeaway from the 74th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee
3. Discussion on the objective of the Task Force
4. Discussion on the best ways to receive information on actual quantities of exports
5. Progress on UNCTAD eCITES solution implementation in other countries & territories: feasibility study in Mozambique (UNCTAD)
6. Update on recent developments:
 - 1) CITES Secretariat
 - 2) UNECE
 - 3) ESCAP
 - 4) Participating Management Authorities
7. AOB & Next meeting