



Ornamental rosewood carvings, China © EIA

ADDRESSING ASEAN'S REGIONAL ROSEWOOD CRISIS: AN URGENT CALL TO ACTION

A Briefing for the 11th Meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Experts Group on CITES (CITES AEG), May 5-8, 2015, Brunei

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)¹

The Regional Rosewood Crisis

Illegal logging and trade in rosewoods to supply Asia's booming Hongmu furniture markets is driving a violent wave of crime across the Mekong.

More than 150 forest rangers, police, soldiers and loggers have been killed in rosewood enforcement operations in recent years.² With many forested areas straddling national borders, the violence associated with this trade has threatened regional stability.³

Key commercial tree species - *Dalbergia cochinchinensis*, *Pterocarpus macrocarpus/pedatus* and *Dalbergia oliveri/bariensis* - are at imminent risk of extinction across their range.

Loggers have ransacked production forests and protected areas alike: even World Heritage sites in the region are at risk of de-listing due to the illegal trade in rosewood⁴, undermining the rule of law and threatening regional tourism revenues.

The corrupt trade is an increasingly embarrassing stain on the reputation of the timber trade and forest governance across the Mekong and in China.⁵

Urgent action required by CITES AEG parties:

- amend Annotation 5 of the CITES Appendix II listing of *Dalbergia cochinchinensis* to Annotation 4
- list *Pterocarpus macrocarpus/pedatus* and *Dalbergia oliveri/bariensis* on Appendix II of CITES, also with Annotation 4

Both actions can be progressed through formal proposals to the 22nd Meeting of the Plants Committee (October 19-23, 2015), seeking adoption at the 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES in September 2016.



Siamese Rosewood

The severity of the problems associated with Siamese rosewood (*Dalbergia cochinchinensis*) led regional leaders to protect the species on Appendix II of CITES in March 2013, following a proposal from Thailand and Vietnam.⁶

But the trade in illegal *D. cochinchinensis* persists, partly because **the listing's Annotation 5 restricts controls to only logs, sawn timber and veneers.**

A growing furniture and components trade not regulated by CITES funnels both illegal and legal Siamese rosewood unhindered into regional markets.⁷ With even the roots of Siamese rosewood trees being illegally harvested for export, border officials struggle to determine how to apply Annotation 5.⁸

Amending Annotation 5 to become Annotation 4 would close this loophole and ensure all trade in *Dalbergia cochinchinensis* by CITES is regulated, giving range states better monitoring and enforcement tools to guide and govern any future trade.⁹

Replacement Species

As Siamese rosewood has become virtually depleted in the wild and some trade is restricted through limited CITES controls, lookalike replacement species also valued in the Hongmu furniture market are now being systematically targeted and unsustainably harvested.

This is particularly the case for *Pterocarpus macrocarpus/pedatus* (padauk, or Burmese padauk) and *Dalbergia oliveri/bariensis* (tamalan, or Burmese rosewood).

The listing of these species on Appendix II of CITES is justified as replacements to Siamese rosewood, but also in their own right as standalone species in danger of extinction from illegal and unsustainable trade.

Commerce in these species facilitates illegal Siamese rosewood trade through species mis-declaration, creating identification problems which fundamentally undermine regional customs enforcement and taxation processes.

Figure 1. Volume (m³) of Chinese Hongmu/rosewood Log Imports from Mekong Countries, 2005-13

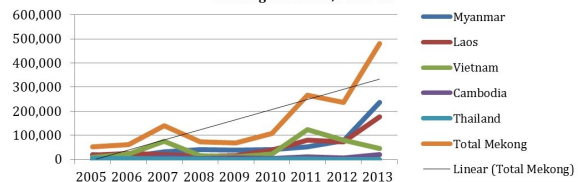


Figure 2. Value (US\$) of China's rosewood & padauk furniture imports (HS Codes 94035010 & 94036010) from the Mekong, 2013 to March 2015

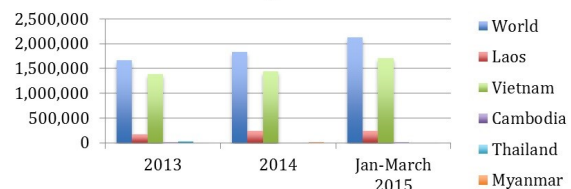
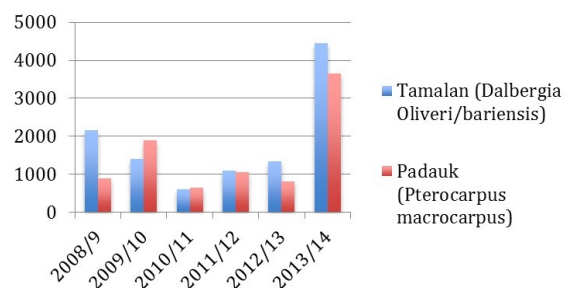


Figure 3. Reported Seizures (cubic tonnes) of illegal Tamalan & Padauk in Myanmar, 2008-14



China's imports of Hongmu logs, sawn timber and furniture continue to explode (Figs 1 & 2), with padauk and Burmese rosewood now constituting the bulk of this trade.¹⁰

Myanmar's standing stocks of padauk and tamalan are of particular concern (Fig 3), although these species are also being targeted in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

A Regional Call for Concerted Action

These issues were recognised at a high-level Regional Dialogue on Siamese Rosewood convened by Thailand in Bangkok during December 2014 as an emergency response to the escalating rosewood crisis. The Dialogue, attended by Siamese rosewood range states within ASEAN and China, concluded that concerted and coordinated regional action was required to stem the devastating effects of the illegal trade.

Vietnam proposed that Annotation 5 for *Dalbergia cochinchinensis* be amended and that replacement and lookalike species, including *Pterocarpus macrocarpus/pedatus* and *Dalbergia oliveri bariensis*, be listed on CITES Appendix II.¹¹ Thailand also expressed a desire to close the loophole in Siamese rosewood trade provided by Annotation 5.

In a landmark sign of regional cooperation, Parties to the Dialogue - including China - agreed an Action Plan proposing that both issues be progressed at the 11th

Meeting of the ASEAN Experts Group (AEG) on CITES meeting, in Brunei, in time for formal proposals to CoP17 in 2016.¹²

Ensuring proposals are also shared early and submitted ahead of the 22nd Meeting of the CITES Plants Committee will be important in achieving these goals.

It is therefore recommended that parties to the 11th Meeting of the ASEAN Experts Group on CITES (CITES AEG) agree to:

- amend Annotation 5 of the Appendix II listing of *Dalbergia cochinchinensis* to Annotation 4 through a formal proposal to the 22nd Meeting of the Plants Committee and 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES;
- propose that *Pterocarpus macrocarpus/pedatus* and *Dalbergia oliveri bariensis* be listed on Appendix II of CITES, also with Annotation 4, through a formal proposal to the Plants Committee and Conference of the Parties (CoP17).

Action Timeline

May 5-8 2015	August 6 2015	September 7 2015	October 19-23 2015	January 11-15 2016	September (TBC) 2016
CITES AEG	ASOF	AMAF	22nd CITES Plants Committee	66th CITES Standing Committee	CITES CoP17





Rosewood logs stored in a warehouse, Dong Ha, Vietnam © EIA

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