



MEDIA RELEASE
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IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION: Global Wildlife Treaty Bans Massive Illegal Timber Trade from Nigeria

Washington D.C. - The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) commends [the trade suspension](#) on rosewood from Nigeria, agreed upon by the governing body of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES Standing Committee) at its meeting in Sochi and effective as of November 1, 2018. An investigation by the CITES Secretariat and recent export data from Nigeria confirm EIA's findings published in 2017 and 2018, exposing one of the largest forest crimes uncovered in recent history. Should exports continue despite the ban, all countries in the world are instructed to stop the illegal wood at their borders.

In [The Rosewood Racket](#) and the recent [The Racket Continues](#), EIA revealed the acute crisis in the Nigerian timber sector, characterized by widespread illegality and massive fraud linked to large-scale corruption schemes. The hunt for precious rosewood has depleted the country's forests; accelerated desertification in rural areas; and contributed to a staggering deforestation rate of four percent annually in Nigeria, the fourth highest in the world.

The "kosso" tree (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) was included on Appendix II of the Convention in January 2017 in order to control the trade and ensure legal and sustainable harvest. In practice, the contrary has occurred: in a desperate rush to extract as many trees as possible from fragile dry forests, Nigeria has been exporting approximately 40 containers a day filled with kosso timber to China and Vietnam. EIA estimates that more than four million trees, worth roughly half a billion dollars a year, were cut down in Nigeria from January 2017 to March 2018 in what is thought to be the largest violation of the Convention in history.

EIA documented the ongoing crisis in Nigeria for the first time in 2017. Evidence indicated the critical role of then Environment Minister Amina J. Mohammed, who signed close to 3,000 CITES export permits, which allowed traffickers to launder an estimated US \$300 million worth of rosewood logs, just days before she left office and became the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In this recent decision, the CITES governing body pointed to the responsibility of importing countries, and recommended an independent investigation ("technical mission") to be carried out in both Vietnam and China in the coming months. China is the world's largest importer of illegal timber.

Lisa Handy, EIA's Director of Forest Campaigns, gave the following statement: "This international ban is a pivotal step towards reforming the global timber trade and its significance reaches well beyond CITES.

While Nigeria needs to urgently reform its forest sector, we must also focus on its trading partners who have accepted the equivalent of millions of stolen trees. As long as there are markets willing to turn a blind eye in this way, forest crimes will continue. China and Vietnam urgently need to prohibit the entry of illegal timber into their countries.

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