

18.54 Radio Transmission Station in the Arava Valley, Israel

APPRECIATING the special value of the Arava Valley as part of the great Syrian-African Rift Valley, which is a major flyway for millions of central and eastern European migratory birds including endangered and protected species;

RECOGNIZING the significance of the small, last remaining, open space landscape in the fragile Negev desert ecosystem for wildlife, including endangered species, and as wilderness area;

NOTING that the United States Board for International Broadcasting and the Voice of America (VOA), in agreement with the Government of Israel, plan to construct a huge radio transmission station in the Arava Valley with an antenna field covering 2,000 acres and consisting of 22 towers up to 160 to 200 metres high with thousands of antenna cables in between, producing highly intensive electro-magnetic radiation emitted by 16 transmitters of 500 kW each;

AWARE that this station will have an adverse impact on birds and any other wildlife that enters the hazardous area, through physical collision with the structure, thermal impact produced by the high microwave radiation, and possible unknown non-thermal impact on the navigation of the birds, and that the station if built in this location will have a direct and indirect impact of loss of more than 100 square kilometres of the last remaining wilderness open space in the Central Negev;

CONCERNED that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by the Israeli National Planning Council was never completed, that an EIS was never done as required in accordance with United States' law and that both the Governments of Israel and the United States intend to approve the project and start construction;

The General Assembly of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, at its 18th Session in Perth, Australia, 28 November-5 December 1990:

CALLS UPON the Governments of Israel and the United States to deny approval of the VOA station plan prior to a full completion of the EIS as required in Israel and as required in the United States in accordance with the domestic standards and legislation including the United States Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Note: There was dissension over the factual accuracy of this recommendation and this was not resolved. The United States State member delegation challenged the facts, while the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and other NGO members upheld the text, reporting that the facts were derived from Board of International Broadcasting (BIB) formal documents. The text was adopted by a clear majority of Category A and Category B members.

