

18.56 Narmada Valley Project, India

RECOGNIZING that major dams have created major and irreversible ecological damage in many parts of the world;

CONSIDERING that the proposed Narmada Valley Project, consisting of approximately 30 major, 300 medium and 3000 minor dams, will be one of the largest river valley projects in the world;

CONSIDERING the possible ecological destruction resulting from the submergence of over 900 sq. km of land, much of which is forest land and considering also the fact that the total forest cover of India is already well below the levels considered desirable by the standards both of the National Forest Policy and by the requirements of ecological security for the country;

CONSIDERING that the project will displace over 200,000 people, many of whom are tribal indigenous people, who know no other form of life or livelihood than one dependent on the land and its products;

CONCERNED with the dimensions of the human tragedy that this will involve;

HAVING GOOD REASON TO APPREHEND that the project authorities have not undertaken the necessary environmental or social impact assessments of a project of this dimension and recognizing that the concept of wildlife must include all forms of life, whether large or small, whether plant or animal, whether their usefulness to humans be known or unknown;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the World Bank, the Government of India and the Governments of the States concerned have acquiesced in piecemeal planning of resettlement, rather than insisting upon a comprehensive delineation of land identified for resettlement in consultation with affected people and communities before permitting the start of the project;

DISTRESSED by the fact that the Government of India, which has an international reputation for its attempts to conserve its forests and has promoted farsighted legislation for this purpose, has acquiesced in the proposal to release forest lands for the resettlement of the displaced people and that the World Bank, with its avowed commitment to conservation, has acquiesced in, if not actively promoted, this measure;

GRAVELY CONCERNED that such a policy will set a precedent with far-reaching and potentially disastrous consequences in the case of resettlements from other major projects;

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

1. CALLS UPON the Government of India, the Governments of the States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, the World Bank and all agencies funding the Narmada Valley

Project in part or in its entirety to:

- a. UNDERTAKE a rigorous review of the desirability of implementing this project, whose dimensions are of a scale that could create major and irreversible ecological damage;
 - b. REVERSE the decision, in the interests of avoiding a potentially disastrous precedent, of allocating forest lands for the resettlement of the displaced persons of the proposed Sardar Sarovar dam, which is only among the first of the 30 major dams to be constructed under this project and only one among the hundreds, if not thousands, of projects which will involve displacement of persons and their resettlement;
2. URGES the Director General and all members of IUCN to encourage the development of practical alternatives to large dams and energy-intensive, centrally controlled irrigation projects that cause unacceptable levels of environmental damage and human misery in developing countries.

