

RES 3.079 Conservation of *Gyps* species of Vultures in South and Southeast Asia

RECOGNIZING that vultures are specialized scavengers that play a crucial role in ridding the environment of dead animals that would otherwise rot and cause disease, despair and death to both humans and livestock;

RECOGNIZING that the Long-billed (*Gyps indicus*), Slender-billed (*Gyps tenuirostris*) and White-rumped (*Gyps bengalensis*) Vultures, endemic to South and Southeast Asia, have declined by more than 97 percent during the last 10 years in South Asia and that populations are also at very low levels in Southeast Asia;

NOTING that IUCN–The World Conservation Union has listed the three species as Critically Endangered in the *IUCN Red List*, the highest category of endangerment;

NOTING that historically these *Gyps* species of vultures were common or very common in their range states (Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Malaysia);

FURTHER NOTING that these massive declines of *Gyps* vultures are caused by human activities and could be reversed;

RECALLING that sufficient habitat is present in most of the range states to allow vulture populations to recolonize and recover;

FURTHER RECALLING that vultures are an integral part of the cultures in all South Asian countries and play an important ecological role by cleaning up livestock carcasses;

ACKNOWLEDGING that many range states have taken measures to protect vultures by including them in protected-species lists;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the Bombay Natural History Society, with the financial support of the Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species (Government of the United Kingdom), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK), the Zoological Society of London and the Haryana Forest Department (India) has established a Vulture Rescue Centre;

NOTING that BirdLife International has determined that all three species are Critical Endangered in the *Bird Red Data Book for Asia*, and that IUCN also lists these species as Critically Endangered in the *2004 IUCN Red List*, mainly based on the continuing precipitous population declines in all populations;

FURTHER NOTING that recent studies, published in the journal *Nature*, prove that massive declines in the population of vultures in South Asia is due mainly to exposure to the Non Steroid Anti Inflammatory Drug (NSAID) Diclofenac in livestock carcasses (*Nature* **427**, 630–633, 12 Feb 2004);

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT Diclofenac is the principal cause for catastrophic decline during the last decade but recognizing that other secondary factors like the loss of nesting sites, indiscriminate use of pesticides, and other factors, may be important on a local scale;

AWARE of the fact that veterinary use of Diclofenac started in India in 1993 and in Pakistan in 1998 and within a very short time, massive deaths of vultures were noted in both countries;

CONCERNED that widespread use of veterinary Diclofenac raises significant fear throughout the world about environmental contamination by lethal drugs that will further reduce *Gyps* vultures to unsustainable levels, inevitably leading to their extinction;

AWARE of the need to restore vulture populations through captive-breeding and release at appropriate times, withdrawal of veterinary Diclofenac, and its replacement with an appropriate risk-free substitute;

FURTHER NOTING the *South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan* and its recommendations;

CONGRATULATING the Haryana Forest Department for providing free land and other support for the establishment of the Vulture Rescue Centre;

NOTING the work already under way in support of the programme by the governments of Pakistan, India and Nepal; and

CONGRATULATING the Darwin Initiative, the Peregrine Fund (UK), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, BirdLife International, Zoological Society of London, and National Bird of Prey Trust (UK) for continuing to support and fund vulture recovery initiatives in India, Nepal, Pakistan and other countries;

The World Conservation Congress at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17–25 November 2004:

1. CALLS on *Gyps* vulture range states to begin action immediately to prevent all uses of Diclofenac in veterinary applications that allow Diclofenac to be present in carcasses of domestic livestock and therefore available as food for vultures;

2. CALLS for the establishment, with the utmost urgency, of an IUCN South Asian Vulture Task Force under the auspices of IUCN, to review, update and facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the *South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan*;

3. REQUESTS *Gyps* vulture range states to develop and implement national vulture recovery plans, including conservation breeding and release;

4. URGES the *Gyps* range states, along with national and international non-governmental organizations, especially BirdLife International, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Bombay Natural History Society, Bird Conservation Nepal, the Ornithological Society of Pakistan, the Peregrine Fund, the Zoological Society of London, the National Bird of Prey Trust, the Wildlife Conservation Society and others, as well as governments to give special support – technical and financial – to enable implementation of the *South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan*; and

5. URGES the IUCN Director General and the IUCN Species Survival Commission to make:

(a) a strategic commitment in developing an effective programme for restoration of vulture populations through international cooperation; and

(b) a long-term commitment, including seeking the transfer of technical expertise and financial support from international donor organizations and governments to the range states.

State member Sweden abstained from voting on this motion for reasons given in the Swedish Government's general statement on the motions process (see page x).

The Department of State, United States, provided the following statement for the record:

State and agency members United States refrained from engaging in deliberations on this motion and took no national government position on the motion as adopted for reasons given in the US General Statement on the IUCN Resolution Process.

