

Preventing the extinction of the Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*) in India

ALARMED by documented deaths of great Indian bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), a Critically Endangered species endemic to the Indian subcontinent, due to collisions with the power-line infrastructure laid over the species' habitat resulting in severe negative impact on its population;

CONCERNED that deaths due to collisions with power lines have adversely affected the already fragmented and depleted populations of these birds in semi-arid regions and grassland habitats, most of which are wrongly categorised as 'wastelands' in Indian Government records;

FURTHER CONCERNED that with a global population of less than 150 individuals, the great Indian bustard faces imminent threat of extinction owing to severe habitat loss, predation and uncontrolled grazing of livestock disturbing the species' breeding activities;

AWARE that bird mortalities through power-line collision and electrocution are documented in every region of the world, with the 'Review of the conflict between migratory birds and electricity power grids in the African-Eurasian region' adopted by the 10th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP10, Norway, 2011) and by the 5th Meeting of Parties to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA MOP5, France, 2012);

FURTHER AWARE that for heavy-bodied birds such as great Indian bustard, the impact of poorly located or poorly designed power-line infrastructure with inadequate mitigation measures may be particularly significant and fatal;

APPLAUDING the scientific studies conducted to identify and address this problem in many countries including India, and regional initiatives to address the issue;

RECOGNISING that guidance on good planning, cost-effective designs for bird-safe infrastructure and methods for mitigation of existing infrastructure, are available in preventing collision of bustards;

AWARE that the government of India has launched the Great Indian Bustard Recovery Programme which includes conservation breeding; and

WELCOMING the establishment of an emergency national expert panel through India's Supreme Court to provide recommendations for the great Indian bustard's population recovery;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. CALLS UPON the Government of India, renewable energy companies (especially wind and solar) and other power companies operating in India to ensure that all new power infrastructure complies with measures to prevent bustard collision and electrocution;

2. RECOMMENDS bringing renewable energy projects under the umbrella of strict Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and minimising the collision and electrocution of bustards by relocating, realigning or redesigning the infrastructures of power lines, windmills and solar panels;

3. URGES the Government of India and respective state governments where bustards occur, power companies, financial institutions and other stakeholders to liaise with each other, and with the CMS Secretariat and CMS Energy Task Force, Wildlife Institute of India, The Corbett Foundation, Bombay Natural History Society and other organisations working on this species to ensure that existing and planned infrastructure which is harmful to bustards is identified and is subject to urgent remedial action, with monitoring to measure effectiveness;

4. FURTHER CALLS UPON the Government of India to recognise semi-arid regions and grasslands that are important for bustards as important ecosystems; and

5. FURTHER URGES the Indian Army and Indian Air Force to liaise with the organisations working on the species to develop a plan to manage the species inside defence establishments that are close to bustard habitats in India.