

Ms. Julia Marton-Lefèvre,
Director General, IUCN
Rue Mauverney 28,
Gland, 1196
Switzerland

August 31, 2008

Dear Ms. Marton-Lefèvre,

Ref: IUCN involvement in Dhamra port project, and our letter dated May 7, 2008

You may recall that on May 7, we wrote to you expressing deep concern regarding the procedures employed by IUCN in engaging with the Dhamra Port Corporation Ltd (letter attached for your convenience). To date the only response we have received is a public statement '*Dhamra Port Project: The Role of the International Union for Conservation of Nature*' dated 4 June 2008.

While the public statement does affirm that the IUCN's involvement "*is neither intended nor should be construed as approving or disapproving*", IUCN has not addressed the other grave issues raised in our letter and has not corrected the widely held impression that the IUCN believes that all the port's impacts on the turtles or the complex ecology of the area are manageable. The IUCN statement also does not prevent the continued use of IUCN's name by the project promoters to project an environmentally benign image of the project, nor does the public statement of 4 June address the lack of consultation or the broader social and environmental impacts, beyond turtles, of the Dhamra port project. Does the lack of a response indicate that IUCN thinks that these issues are insignificant or do not warrant any reply?

The IUCN's refusal to consult its members in India runs contrary to its own statement in the 'Working for Conservation: Programme Report 2006 (<http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2007-007.pdf>) "*the Union can deliver when members, commissions, partners and the secretariat work together to find scientific consensus, formulate sound policy advice, and create partnerships to tackle conservation challenges in the field.*"

As organizations and individuals who are part of the IUCN network and MTSG members in India who have been working on the Dhamra port issue for years prior to the IUCN's involvement, we must place on record our disagreement with, and independence from, the stance taken by the IUCN on the Dhamra issue.

We believe that the interests of conservation would have been better served by the IUCN using its significant influence and reputation to:

1. Nurture consultation with IUCN and MTSG members and other conservation and livelihood groups in India prior to the Union's involvement. This would have helped in utilising the considerable expertise and knowledge of the area held by specialists who live and work in the country where the problem exists.
2. Recommend that a complete and scientifically rigorous environment impact assessment be conducted, as has been requested by various national members and other specialists.

By ignoring this critical step – fundamental in any major development project in India or elsewhere in the world – and accepting the terms of the Dhamra project as a *fait accompli*, the Union is undermining years of dedicated work and efforts by respected national conservationists.

3. Urge the Government of Orissa to reconsider the unrestricted coastal development plan and to seriously integrate environmental concerns and mitigation into their planning.

As the IUCN's members in India, we are still hoping that the Union will respond to the concerns raised in our letter of 7 May, and show that it takes seriously the matter of collaboration with its members.

Furthermore, as members of the IUCN family we are concerned that in this matter the IUCN involvement with DPCL and Tata Steel can compromise our conservation credibility in India. While we appreciate IUCN's engagement with all bodies, including business, it is essential that the IUCN correct the impression created in the Dhamra case that this can be on terms that disregard the ecological imperatives and ground realities.

Sincerely,

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