



The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation

RESOLUTION OPPOSING CONSTRUCTION OF THE INDIAN NEUTRINO OBSERVATORY AT MUDUMALAI TIGER RESERVE

WHEREAS, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is among the most biologically important natural areas in India, containing over a fifth of the country's vertebrates and flowering plants, 15% of its butterflies, and numerous endangered species, despite being small in size (5520 km²) by international standards; and

WHEREAS, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve also contains one of the largest contiguous forests in Asia, occurring within the crucial Western Ghats-Sri Lanka global-biodiversity hotspot, and sustains India's largest wild populations of Asian Elephants and Bengal Tigers; and

WHEREAS, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and contiguous forests in the Brahmagiri Hills, Nilgiri Hills, and Eastern Ghats span about 12,000 km² of land that collectively provides crucial elephant and wildlife habitat; and

WHEREAS, the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is of global conservation significance because it supports viable wild populations of endangered species such as the Bengal Tiger, Gaur, Indian Wild Dog, and critically endangered White-Rumped Vulture; and

WHEREAS, a current plan to construct a major semi-industrial project, the Indian Neutrino Observatory (INO), in Singara would have severe impacts on the conservation and scientific values of the park, its wildlife, and wilderness character; and

WHEREAS, Singara provides important habitat for a diversity of wildlife and is a vital wildlife corridor linking Mudumalai with forests to the North and East; and

WHEREAS, the INO was approved with a cursory and inadequate environmental impact assessment that fails to consider many of its important on- and off-site threats to the Singara area, such as promoting a large influx of nonresident workers and major increases in roads, houses, and infrastructure into the area; and

WHEREAS, construction of the INO would involve transporting an estimated 156,000 truckloads of debris and building materials through the Mudumalai and Bandipur areas, extensive blasting and vibrations from tunneling 2.4 kilometers through mountains, increasing likelihood of human-wildlife conflicts, and pollution of natural water sources; and

WHEREAS, the proponents of the INO have not adequately considered alternative sites for the project within areas of less-crucial importance for India's native ecosystems and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, local people living in the INO area, which are mostly unskilled workers, are likely to gain little employment from the project and would find their local environment seriously stressed by the 342,000 liters of water and 3 megawatts of electricity required daily from a region that already suffers from chronic drought and power shortages;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, the world's largest scientific organization devoted to the study and wise use of tropical ecosystems, urges the Indian Government:

- 1) Not to permit the establishment of the Indian Neutrino Observatory in Singara; and
- 2) To search for alternative sites for the INO that do not endanger India's imperiled wildlife and biodiversity; and
- 3) To recognize that the ATBC fully supports valid scientific research but not when its impacts on sensitive wildlife and rare ecosystems are likely to be so severe.