

National Conference on Eastern Ghats
16-17 April, 2015, Bhuvaneshwar, Odisha

Bhuvaneshwar Declaration

We had deliberations for two days on Eastern Ghats – its ecology and current status. A number of papers by erudite and committed scholars from different Universities and institutions provided lot of information and increased awareness. Based on these presentations, deliberations, and generated knowledge, we commit ourselves to the following:

1. We are deeply concerned about threats and challenges to the faunal elements and biogeographic significance of Eastern Ghats, including the problems being faced by adivasis and the struggles of traditional communities.
2. Sadly, we note that already several species are lost and loss of biodiversity is now a continuous phenomena.
3. We strongly feel that people, governments and civil society, in each of the States, Indian government and international institutions to come together and take up actions and programmes that are aimed at conserving pristine ecology of Eastern Ghats.
4. We realize that modern development, privatization of natural resources, developmental projects, including mining, urbanization, industrialization, in the past, now and in future, have the potential to destroy Eastern Ghats. We need to review all development projects in this region.
5. We call upon national government and also State governments of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Telangana, Kerala and Chattisgarh to prepare a action plan for protection and conservation of ecology and natural resources of Eastern Ghats.
6. We feel there is need to form a Research Network of Universities, that are in Eastern Ghats region, and also working on issues and challenges of Eastern Ghats, including ecology, development and biodiversity. This Research Network, with committed funds from national and State governments, should support primary research, workshop, information exchange and capacity building programmes, with objective of developing a database of information on ecology and development, and building ideas and knowledge.
7. We request the National Government to develop a National Legal Framework for Eastern Ghats, including Acts, Statutes, procedures and policies, with the objective of going beyond the current Protected Areas (PA) approach.
8. We demand the Government of India to form a Regional Coordination Committee of States on Eastern Ghats. This Committee should have the mandate of linking and coordinating activities relating to Eastern Ghats.
9. We call upon civil society, related to adivasis and social communities, to form a grand alliance to bring together knowledge and action on Eastern Ghats.

10. We request the Union Minister for Environment to form an experts panel to review social, ecological, economic and political contexts of Eastern Ghats, to develop a report, that provides suggestions and recommendations for Eastern Ghats protection. This should be on the lines of Madhav Gadgil report on Western Ghats.
11. We request the government to develop a Tree Museum, to show case wide variety flora, fauna and ecology of Eastern Ghats.
12. We need to establish a Youth Scholarship Fund, to promote nature camps, awareness programmes and research work, for the young girls and boys.
13. We need promotion of ecological agriculture, water and soil conservation in upland reaches of Eastern Ghats. Rivers, streams and waterfalls in Eastern Ghats have to be protected, and minimum water flows are ensured.
14. Pollution has to be prevented, and urban, industrial and household toxic waste has to be reduced through changes in consumption, recycling and reuse.

We appeal to central government and policymakers to create a National Trusteeship Council (NTC) to facilitate protection of ecosystems like forests, mountains, rivers, coastline, grass lands, wilderness areas etc., NTC thus created should ensure restoration of damaged ecosystems, to pass on the same to the future generations.

We also appeal for

- Special conservation status to Eastern Ghats on par with Western Ghats and Eastern Himalayas
- To create Autonomous Eastern Ghats Protection Authority
- To persuade UNO to declare Eastern Ghats as World Natural Heritage Site