

Sen. Mario Monti, Prime Minister  
(segrgen@governo.it)

27<sup>th</sup> September, 2012

Pres. Antonio Catricalà, Secretary to the Council of Ministers  
(sscatricala@governo.it)

Prof. Vittorio Grilli, Minister of Economic Affairs  
(segreteria.ministro@tesoro.it)

**Ref. International concern regarding the fate of the Fortino (International Centre for Nature Conservation and Community Involvement for the Protection of Migratory Birds), Calabria, Italy**

Dear Senator Monti, President Catricalà and Prof. Grilli,

The **ICCA Consortium** is an international association under Swiss law uniting organizations of indigenous peoples, local communities and NGOs concerned with the appropriate recognition and support to community conserved areas and natural resources throughout the world. We are a partner organization of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP GEF SGP).

We write this letter to communicate our **deep concerns regarding an alleged plan by the Italian Government to sell the "Fortino"**, a disused military building in Calabria, Italy, which for the past twenty years has hosted the ***International Centre for Nature Conservation and Community Involvement for the Protection of Migratory Birds*** (hereafter "the Center").

Throughout the years, the Center has accommodate environmentalists, ornithologists and hundreds of volunteers whose chief work is to protect migratory birds – particularly birds of prey and storks – during the most vulnerable moments of their migratory routes in this part of Southern Italy. Rented for the last ten years, the Fortino is positioned in one of the crucial spots of the migration routes of these birds. The active protection of the migratory route and environmental research conducted on site is of importance not only for environmental knowledge across Europe but as **a model of community conservation efforts**. The Center attracts volunteers from all over Europe, and even further afield, adding to the local economy and culture. It has been argued in numerous meetings and events, that the Center has been able to develop **a *de facto* Community Conserved Area at the heart of the Mediterranean**.

For nearly thirty years, a group of environmentalists have staunchly opposed the slaughter of birds of prey and storks, illegally killed each spring along the Sicilian and Calabrian coastline at the Strait of Messina. We do not need to stress that these birds are protected under Italian, European and international legislation and agreements. The Calabrian volunteers who started voluntary action to protect these birds in the early 1980s were soon joined by other volunteers from various parts of Italy, Germany, England, Sweden and Tunisia. During the early years many violent attacks were

committed against them but, instead of generating fear, this made them even more determined to oppose in a non-violent way the bloody "tradition" of shooting these birds of prey. This is why and how the Fortino came into being, initially as a place where people could survey the migration and readily communicate with the police if poaching was happening. Later, as the building was rented and restored by the NGO **Fondazione Mediterranea Falchi**, as a fully fledged, and increasingly well known, **International Centre for Nature Conservation and Community Involvement for the Protection of Migratory Birds**.

**We urge the Italian Government to:**

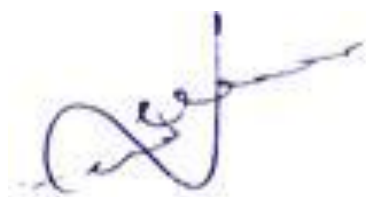
- **allow and encourage the *Fondazione Mediterranea Falchi* to continue its work at the Fortino** and actively encourages and facilitates the positive environmental and social impacts it does have in the region and the Mediterranean as a whole;
- **reach a long-term rental agreement with the *Fondazione Mediterranea Falchi* to continue running the Fortino as the *International Centre for Nature Conservation and Community Involvement for the Protection of Migratory Birds*.**

We respectfully maintain that failing to do so would signal disregard the invaluable positive social and environmental impacts the Centre has been having on this area of Calabria. It would also signal disregard for the continued efforts of over thirty years of hard work and the perseverance of the many individuals and groups that supported the survival and well-being of these endangered birds – a biodiversity jewel of the Mediterranean.

**Please recognise the history and value of the Fortino and make sure its mission can continue!**

As we are ready to travel to the **11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Hyderabad, India (8-19 Oct. 2012)**, we will make sure that **a delegation from the ICCA Consortium will get in touch with the Italian representative there**. We are very hopeful to hear about a positive resolution of this issue of international, and not only Italian, concern.

We thank you very much in advance for your kind consideration of this crucial issue and we look forward to hearing from you on a positive resolution of the case,



Dr. M. Taghi Farvar  
President, The ICCA Consortium



Dr. Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend  
Global Coordinator, The ICCA Consortium