

September 3, 2021

Mr. Sébastien Clerc
CEO, Voltalia
84 bd de Sébastopol
75003 Paris, France

Dear CEO Sébastien Clerc,

We are writing as a group of global nature conservation organizations, representing a combined over 15 million members and supporters worldwide, to urge to you relocate the Canudos 1 wind energy project in Bahia, Brazil, and to restore the site that you have prematurely and inappropriately cleared. We are strong supporters of renewable energy development as a key component of combating climate change, but we also recognize that some locations are not appropriate for wind energy development. The site chosen for Canudos 1 is clearly one such location.

The area where the Canudos 1 project is intended to be constructed is so uniquely important for biodiversity that adverse impacts over even a relatively small area could cause serious harm to an entire species. Lear's Macaw is a highly threatened species that is found nowhere else on earth. The site is thus designated as a Key Biodiversity Area and an Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) site. Forty years ago, there were only 40 Lear's Macaws remaining, yet after intensive conservation efforts by a wide range of stakeholders, there are almost 2,000 individuals today. This hard-won and tenuous success is now in jeopardy due to this wind energy project.

It is well known that wind turbines and their associated infrastructure can have serious impacts on birds, especially large-bodied, highly mobile species. Lear's Macaws fly at fast speeds, fly high off the ground, and travel long distances daily to obtain food. They are also active at dawn and dusk, increasing their chances of colliding with turbines in low light. As such, the Canudos 1 wind facility poses a high risk of macaw collisions with wind turbines. Further, this species travels in flocks, so there is a chance for a single collision event to kill multiple birds. The addition of associated infrastructure poses additional threats; for example, electrocutions and collisions with power lines are yet another existing threat to Lear's Macaw.

We applaud you for your statement on complying with IFC standards in your 2019 Sustainability Report. The report states that, *"Voltalia works to meet IFC's (International Finance Corporation) Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability."* IFC's performance standard clearly states that AZE sites *"will not be acceptable for financing, with the possible exception of projects specifically designed to contribute to the conservation of the area"*. Thus, we are dismayed that Voltalia would consider a project that -- based on our analysis -- clearly overlaps with an AZE site, thus going against IFC performance standards. It is even more troubling that this is a wind energy project, which during its operation would have significant negative impacts on the species for which the AZE site was designated.

Furthermore, with the recent statement by the Public Ministry of the state of Bahia, Brazil, recommending the immediate suspension or cancellation of the implementation of the wind project, it is clear that the ecological threat posed by this project is not fully vetted or mitigated. The over 75,000 signatures on a change.org petition to move the wind project, the majority of which are from Brazilians, show that many Brazilian citizens also oppose the project's current location.

We take very seriously the immense importance of shifting from fossil fuel-based energy sources to renewables, as well as the importance of sustainable development and energy provision for this area of Brazil. Thus, we do not take this stance lightly. However, given the very real threat of irreversibly harming a highly threatened species, we strongly urge you to move the project to a different location. This would maintain the benefits that would be realized by clean energy and sustainable development for the local communities, while avoiding the risk of catastrophic biodiversity loss.

In addition, we ask that you commit to restoring the site with a vegetation community that will benefit the Lear's Macaw. The site should not have been cleared without completion of an environmental impact assessment, as recently confirmed by the Public Ministry of Bahia. This harmful and inappropriate action must be remedied to reverse damage that Voltalia has already done to the species.

It is an unfortunate reality that wind energy development is not appropriate in all locations, which is why siting to avoid unacceptable impacts to birds and other wildlife must be given full consideration before proceeding with plans for any given facility. This project's location should not have proceeded beyond the prospecting phase of project investigation.

We stand ready, along with local experts on the ground, to provide you with any support that would be useful in finding alternative solutions. We hope you will agree that harm to a charismatic and globally threatened species must be avoided at all costs.

Sincerely,



Patricia Zurita
Chief Executive, BirdLife International



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Président, Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO)



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