

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES

LAKE ICHKEUL, TUNISIA

N° 9

Criteria (10) - Outstanding universal value

A National Park has been proposed for Lake Ichkeul but it has not yet been legally proclaimed. The area also has status as a Biosphere Reserve.

The area is recognized as the most important single wetland in North Africa. It is of international importance to huge numbers of wintering waterfowl (averaging a quarter of a million wintering geese, ducks and coots). Its declaration as a World Heritage Site is strongly supported by the International Waterfowl Research Bureau.

It appears that there is a prima facie case for the declaration of Lake Ichkeul as a World Heritage Site under Criteria C. 10(iii) and (iv). Its value lies in its continuity as a wetland sanctuary for migratory species.

IUCN's recommendation hinges upon the view the World Heritage Council proposes regarding "outstanding universal value". If this is understood to mean the most outstanding site say in North Africa our recommendation would be positive. If the term is to incorporate only the 4 or 5 most outstanding wetland areas in the world we would request that judgment be deferred pending further review.

Criteria (11) - Integrity

The value of the area as a World Heritage Site lies in its wetland character which is threatened by the proposed construction of three dams on its inflowing rivers.

It is recommended that assurances be sought from the Tunisian Government that the waterflow and existing salinity of the lake be maintained. If this is not done the area would have to be de-listed in the future.

Recommendation

Defer decision pending views of Tunisian Government on water quality and assurances of continuity in supply.