

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

In 2004, the UN established the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), following a request by Cameroon and Nigeria to assist in implementing a 2002 International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling on the disputed land border between the two countries. The demarcation process involved four separate sections: the Lake Chad basin, the land boundary, the maritime boundary and the highly contested Bakassi Peninsula, which has rich offshore oil deposits and fish stocks. In June 2006, the parties agreed on the withdrawal of Nigerian forces and the transfer of authority in the peninsula to Cameroon under the Greentree Agreement.

The CNMC, collocated with UNOWA with the same SRSG, is mandated to complete technical aspects such as border demarcation, delineation and demilitarization, but also provides monitoring and early warning mechanisms to ensure the protection of rights for those in the area of transition and encourages cooperative economic and environmental arrangements between the two populations. UNOWA's SRSG also serves as both the Chairman of the CNMC and the Follow-up Committee for the Greentree Agreement, which is in place until 2013.

Demarcation of the land boundary is the remaining technical aspect of CNMC's mandate. At the time of writing, the parties have agreed on more than 1,600 kilometers of the 1,950 kilometer-long land border. To encourage agreement on the remaining 350 kilometers, the CNMC held a two-day meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in July 2011. In a communiqué at the end of the meeting, both countries reiterated their commitment to complete the demarcation by the end of 2012.

In the past, a number of technical and political issues have caused significant delays in the completion of the process, including faulty estimations of timelines, lack of funding, and omissions in the ICJ ruling of important details that pertain to the exact location of villages and roads along the border, affecting its delineation. Political stalemates have centered on the access to resources, particularly around the Baskassi peninsula, but also included issues of nationality of the affected populations.

Confidence-building measures supported by SRSG Djinnit have played an important role in re-establishing a degree of trust between the two countries, even to the extent that several related issues are now dealt with on an entirely bilateral basis. However, progress could not have been achieved without the commitment by the countries' respective heads of states.

In moving forward implementation of the agreements on the disputed territory between Nigeria and Cameroon, the CNMC has been successful in utilizing its impartiality, technical expertise and facilitation role – and observers view the commission as a success in conflict prevention. In order to ensure to completion of its mandated tasks and enable exit of the Commission, the CNMC has to continue working with the parties on outstanding issues around the remaining land border areas. One challenge to overcome in the process is mobilizing the financial resources necessary to sustain the CNMC. While UNOWA in 2010 strengthened managerial and project management capacity in support of the CNMC trust fund, the capacity of the Commission to cover its mandate remains somewhat constrained.