



PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICAN UNION CALLS FOR THE EARLY ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE CONVENTION ON CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Addis Ababa, 1 August 2014: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, urges the Member States to sign and ratify, as soon as possible, the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation. Also known as the Niamey Convention, this instrument was adopted by the 23rd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on 26 and 27 June 2014.

The Chairperson of the Commission stresses the importance of the early entry into force and effective implementation of the Niamey Convention, which is an important component of the AU Border Programme (AUBP), launched in 2007 and whose two overall objectives are the structural prevention of conflicts and the deepening of integration on the continent. She recalls that the Niamey Convention seeks, in particular, to develop and strengthen good neighborly relations between border communities, territorial administrations, bodies and authorities in two or more States, including through the conclusion of specific agreements and arrangements to this end.

The Chairperson of the Commission expresses the commitment of the Commission to support the efforts of Member States to give full effect to the provisions of the Convention, once it has entered into force. In this regard, particular attention will be paid to the operationalization of the Continental Border Consultative Committee, comprising representatives of the Regional Economic Communities, and tasked, under the auspices of the Commission, to promote cross-border cooperation, as well as of the AUBP Fund, which will be financed through voluntary contributions from Member States and other miscellaneous revenue.

NOTE TO THE EDITORS

About the Niamey Convention: The elaboration of this Convention began in 2009. After the meetings of experts on the issue, the draft Convention was considered by the third Conference of African Ministers in charge of Border Issues, held in Niamey on 17 May 2012, as well as by the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, held in Addis Ababa from 6 to 16 May 2014, before being adopted by the 23rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Malabo, from 26 to 27 June 2014.

Notably, the Convention aims to:

- facilitate cross-border cooperation at local, sub-regional and regional levels;
- facilitate the delimitation and demarcation of African borders, where such an exercise has not yet taken place, and the peaceful settlement of border disputes;
- transform border areas into catalysts for growth, as well as for integration on the continent; and
- promote peace and stability in Africa.

The Convention makes provisions for implementation mechanisms at regional and continental levels, and also establishes an AUBP Fund. It shall enter into force thirty days after the receipt of the fifteenth instrument of ratification or accession.

About the AU Border Programme (AUBP): The AUBP was launched by the first Conference of African Ministers in charge of Border Issues, held in Addis Ababa, on 7 June 2007. The AUBP aims to: facilitate the delimitation and demarcation of African borders where such an exercise has not yet taken place; promote cross-border cooperation; strengthen African capacity for border management; and develop partnerships and mobilize resources in support of the efforts of the African States. Two other Conferences of African Ministers in charge of Border Issues were organized subsequently: in Addis Ababa, on 25 March 2009; and in Niamey, Niger, on 17 May 2012. The fourth Ministerial Conference on the AUBP is scheduled to take place in October 2014.

The AUBP was launched as part of the efforts of African States to meet the challenges related to the management of the borders inherited from colonization, driven as they were by the conviction that the achievement of greater unity and solidarity among African countries and people requires the attenuation of the burden of the borders separating them. Transcending borders as barriers and promoting them as bridges linking one State to another will enable Africa to boost the ongoing efforts to integrate the continent, strengthen its unity and promote peace, security and stability. It is in this context that the OAU/AU has adopted a number of political and legal instruments to guide the efforts of the Member States in the management of border issues, including the principle of the respect of borders existing on achievement of independence, agreed to in Cairo in July 1964; the principle of negotiated settlement of border disputes, affirmed by the 44th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers, held in Addis Ababa in July 1986; and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), adopted by the OAU Summit held in

Durban, in July 2002, which committed Member States to complete, by 2012, the delimitation and demarcation of African borders where such an exercise has not yet taken place.

About the progress made in the implementation of the AUBP:

(i) Delimitation and Demarcation

Since its launch, the AUBP has given particular attention to the delimitation and demarcation of African borders. Indeed, the lack of determination of borders can be a source of misunderstandings, while at the same time impeding the acceleration of the integration process (for example, it is impossible to put in place joint border customs posts to facilitate trade if the border line is not clearly known). The AU Summit held in Malabo, in July 2011, decided to extend to 2017 the deadline for the completion of the delimitation and demarcation of African borders where such an exercise has not yet taken place.

In this respect, the following initiatives have been taken:

- the launch, since 2008, of a Pan-African survey of the borders, through a questionnaire sent to all Member States on the status of their borders. To date, the Commission has received 31 answers, on the basis of which it is endeavoring to establish a Boundary Information System, which will make it possible to have a comprehensive and updated view of the status of African borders;
- support for the demarcation of the border between Mali and Burkina Faso, which was completed in 2010. The AUBP assisted in accelerating the completion of the demarcation of the remaining 413 kms. The 1,303 kms common land border is now fully demarcated;
- support for the delimitation of maritime boundaries between the Comoros, Mozambique, Tanzania and the Seychelles, which culminated in the signing of a Delimitation Treaty on 17 February 2012;
- support for the densification of boundary pillars along the 330 kms of border between Mozambique and Zambia in 2012, as well as along the border between Zambia and Malawi (804 kms). A similar process is underway for the land borders between Mozambique, on the one hand, Tanzania (671 kms) and Malawi (888 kms), on the other hand;
- support for the ongoing delimitation and demarcation exercises between Senegal and Mali (362 kms), Senegal and The Gambia (740 kms) and Senegal and Guinea (330 kms);
- support for the launch of delimitation and demarcation exercises between other countries, particularly between Rwanda and Uganda, as well as between Burkina Faso and Niger. Other requests for assistance are currently being considered; and
- assistance to the AU High-Level Panel on Sudan and South Sudan regarding the delimitation and demarcation of the border between Sudan and South Sudan.

On the basis of the responses to the questionnaire on the status of borders, approximately 35.8 per cent of the total length of the African borders (excluding maritime borders) can be regarded as having been delimited, demarcated and reaffirmed. 13,000 Kms of borders are currently being reaffirmed. Once this exercise is completed, the cap of 50 % of the length of the continental borders will have been crossed.

In addition, the AUBP has received, from Germany, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Italy and Portugal, the colonial archives relating to African borders. The availability of these archives will help expedite the delimitation and demarcation exercises on the continent.

(ii) Cross-border Cooperation

In addition to the adoption of the Niamey Convention, a number of initiatives have been taken with regard to the promotion of cross-border cooperation. After the demarcation of the last segment of the border between Mali and Burkina Faso, the AU, with the support of the GIZ, facilitated the construction of the Ouarakuy - Wanian cross-border health center, which serves the rural communities of Madiakuy and Mafoune (Mali) and Djibasso (Burkina Faso).

Furthermore, technical support has been provided for the establishment of a women's cross-border co-operative for harvesting, processing and marketing mangoes in the sector of Sikasso (Mali), Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) and Khorogho (Ivory Coast). Similarly, the AUBP has technically supported the establishment of community radios in West Africa to help in the promotion of cross-border cooperation.

(iii) Capacity-building

The AUBP has also recorded important achievements with regard to capacity-building. Assistance has been extended to some Member States, in particular, as regards the establishment of National Boundary Commissions.

Another fundamental achievement of AUBP relates to the publication, in 2013 and 2014, of five practical Guidebooks whose objective is to disseminate best practices in specific areas, for use by different actors concerned in order to accelerate the implementation of the Program.

These practical Guidebooks are the following:

- *From Barriers to Bridges – Collection of Official Texts on African Borders from 1963 to 2012;*
- *Creation and Operation of Boundary Commissions in Africa – the User's Guide;*
- *Delimitation and Demarcation of Boundaries in Africa – the User's Guide;*
- *Installation of a Cross-Border Basic Service Infrastructure – the User's Guide; and*
- *Delimitation and Demarcation of Boundaries in Africa – General Issues and Case Studies.*

A Guide on the Mechanisms for the Settlement of Border Disputes is in the process of publication.

These practical Guidebooks are accessible through the following link:

[Http://www.aubis.peaceau.org/guide-books-and-documents-african-borders](http://www.aubis.peaceau.org/guide-books-and-documents-african-borders)

(iv) Partnership and resource mobilization

In their successive statements on the AUBP, the Ministers responsible for border issues have particularly called on the Commission to initiate a campaign of mobilization of resources and to develop partnerships for the implementation of the Program.

As a follow-up, the Commission has developed a close partnership with the Federal Republic of Germany, which provides a significant technical and financial support to the AUBP, through the GIZ. In addition, and in consultation with the Commission, the GIZ provides direct support to Member States in the areas of border delimitation and demarcation, cross-border cooperation and capacity-building. The support provided by Germany from 2008 to 2014 amounts to 23.7 million Euros. The United Kingdom and Denmark have also provided financial support to the AUBP.

The Commission has also developed partnerships with other countries and organizations. Cooperation has been developed with the European Union (EU), to take advantage of its experience in the field of cross-border cooperation, and the United Nations, through its Cartographic Section. Cooperation has also been developed with other institutions, including the Regional Center for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), in Nairobi, and the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE), as well as with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

(v) Outreach and Awareness-raising

In 2011 and 2014, the AUBP produced two documentary films on the results achieved so far. These documentaries are accessible to the public under the following link:

[Http://www.aubis.peaceau.org/guide-books-and-documents-african-borders](http://www.aubis.peaceau.org/guide-books-and-documents-african-borders)

In addition, in 2010, the Ministers in charge of Border Issues agreed to declare 7 June as Africa Border Day. The AU Executive Council endorsed this recommendation, which aims at raising awareness, of all the actors concerned, on the importance of the AUBP. The AEBR has launched an initiative for 7 June to be proclaimed as "International Day of Integration Beyond National Borders" by the United Nations.