

The first boundary marking between Cameroon and Nigeria

A ceremony to establish the first boundary marking between Cameroon and Nigeria was held on 14 Dec 2009. The event was facilitated by the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC) and the United Nations (UN) and was presided over by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. S. Djinnit.

The event involved the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice who is also the Chief of the Cameroon delegation, His Excellency Amadou Ali; the Representative of the Chief of the Nigeria delegation to the CNMC, Mr. Sarki Baowra Marafa Sadig Diggui; members of the diplomatic corps (Canada, Germany, France, EU, UK, USA); local authorities and traditional chieftens along with representatives of the UN system from both countries, namely M. Thierry E. Mertens, UN Resident Coordinator in Cameroon.

The occasion was a culmination of significant diplomatic efforts and support by the international community toward the resolution of boundary issues between Cameroon and Nigeria as well as the consolidation of current and future cooperation between the two countries.

As per the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in Den Hague, dated 10 October 2002 which gave its decision on the 2000 km border between Cameroon and Nigeria, the CNMC was mandated by the government of the two countries and the UN Secretary General to determine the exact boundary line accordingly with the decision of the ICJ.

Given the sensitive and contentious nature of the frontier under question, the process of boundary demarcation has taken 7 years of intense negotiation and delicate diplomacy by the CNMC and its sub-commissions. The intensity of dialogue and active engagement by both the national parties and the UN finally enabled the technical experts (ETM) of the CNMC to reach an agreement on the precise border delineation between the two countries and the placement of over 2000 boundary markers. The completion of this demarcation will enable the local administration on each side to undertake its due function in its area of jurisdiction. As reiterated by the Chief of the Cameroon Delegation, His Excellency Mr. Amadou Ali *“the establishment of the boundary markers does not in any way signify an act of separation between the populations of the two countries since the majority belong to the same ethnic group if not the same family [...] rather, it is a bridge to celebrate renewed friendship and fraternity between the Cameroonians and the Nigerians”*.

It should be highlighted that the work of the Mixed Commission constitutes an important tool and indeed a ‘best practice’ for the resolution of boundary related diplomatic tensions and for consolidating dialogue between neighbouring countries in the future. With this in mind, the Cameroonian authorities have appealed to the international community to renew its support to this important initiative which guarantees cooperation and sustainable peace.