
PRESS RELEASE

Bakassi: Towards the completion of the Greentree Agreement process between Cameroon and Nigeria in August 2013

Geneva, 28 May 2013 - The twenty-second session of the Follow-up Committee which monitors the implementation of the Greentree Agreement on the Bakassi Peninsula was held in Geneva on 27 and 28 May 2013. On that occasion, the Cameroonian and Nigerian delegations have reiterated their commitment to the full and successful implementation by August 2013 of the Greentree Agreement transferring the Bakassi Peninsula from Nigeria to Cameroon in accordance with the 2002 judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), related to the border dispute between the two countries.

Signed in June 2006 by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as well as Presidents Biya and Obasanjo, the Greentree Agreement sets the modalities and time frame for the withdrawal and transfer of authority from Cameroon to Nigeria in Bakassi. The withdrawal of the Nigerian troops from the Bakassi Zone began in 2006 and the transfer of authority was officially concluded on 14 August 2008. The agreement foresees a special transitional period of five years until 13 August 2013 during which, observation missions are conducted jointly - by the parties and the UN - to Bakassi in order to monitor the rights of the Nigerian nationals living in the Peninsula.

In Geneva, the Follow-up Committee discussed the report of the eighteenth observation mission that took place from 13 to 17 May 2013 in the Bakassi Zone. The report underlines the peaceful atmosphere that continues to prevail in the area and the cordial relations existing between the authorities and the populations.

The meeting was chaired by Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa. It was attended by delegations from Nigeria and Cameroon respectively led by Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mohammed Bello Adoke and the Minister Delegate at the Ministry of External Relations Joseph Dion Ngute. Representatives of witnessed States of the signing of the Agreement, notably France, Germany, United Kingdom and United States also participated.

Minister Dion Ngute, the Head of the Cameroonian Delegation, welcomed the fact that the report of the observation mission clearly establishes that peace and understanding prevails between the people, the civilian administration and the security forces in Bakassi. He also listed activities undertaken by his Government to address the needs of the populations and underscored current efforts by both countries to combat the problem of insecurity resulting from piracy against cross border traders.

The Head of the Nigerian Delegation, Mohammed Bello Adoke stated that the Follow-up Committee has over the years provided a unique forum for the two countries to further their common resolve for the security and the well being of their people. "The successes recorded so far are attributable to commitment and sacrifice on the part of all the parties," he said. In order to address the issue of piracy and banditry, he reiterated the need for speedy implementation of the Trans-Border Security Agreement including Joint Border Patrol along the border.

Cameroon and Nigeria are also actively involved in the development of a regional UN-backed strategy to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea which will be adopted at a Summit scheduled to take place in Yaoundé on 24 and 25 June.

Said Djinnit, the Chairman of the Follow-up Committee praised both countries for their commitment to honor the ICJ judgment and cooperate in a constructive manner. He highlighted the positive consequences of cross-border cooperation to sustain peace between the two countries and in the

region. He pointed the need to promote infrastructure and socio-economic development projects in order to improve the living conditions and consolidate the secular friendly relationships between people in the Bakassi Peninsula and throughout the border. Said Djinnit expressed the readiness of the UN to support such confidence building projects which have been identified in the field of microfinance, food security and capacity building.

"By resolving their territorial dispute peacefully, Cameroon and Nigeria have provided a positive example for countries around the world facing similar challenges," concluded Said Djinnit while reiterating the support of the UN to the process.

The last meeting of the Follow-up Committee is scheduled to take place in August 2013 to conclude the process initiated through the signing of the Greentree Agreement in June 2006.

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