



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Press Release

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Frontier Dispute (Benin/Niger)

Authorization of the filing of a Reply by each of the Parties and fixing of the time-limit therefor

THE HAGUE, 13 July 2004. The President of the Chamber of the International Court of Justice formed to deal with the case concerning the Frontier Dispute (Benin/Niger) has authorized the filing of a Reply by each of the Parties in the case.

By an Order of 9 July 2004, Judge Guillaume fixed 17 December 2004 as the time-limit for the filing of those pleadings.

The President of the Chamber fixed this time-limit taking into account the wish of the Parties to be authorized to submit a third pleading, as provided for in Article 3, paragraph 1 (c), of the Special Agreement concluded between them, each Party having previously filed a Memorial and a Counter-Memorial within the time-limits fixed by the Court.

The subsequent procedure has been reserved for further decision.

History of the proceedings

By joint letter of 11 April 2002, filed in the Registry on 3 May 2002, Benin and Niger notified to the Court a Special Agreement, which was signed on 15 June 2001 in Cotonou and entered into force on 11 April 2002.

In the Special Agreement, the Parties requested the Court to:

- “(a) determine the course of the boundary between the Republic of Benin and the Republic of Niger in the sector of the River Niger;
- (b) specify which State owns each of the islands in the said river, and in particular Lété Island;
- (c) determine the course of the boundary between the two States in the sector of the River Mekrou.”

The Parties agreed in advance to accept as final and binding upon them the judgment which the Chamber would render pursuant to the Special Agreement.

Procedure

Contentious proceedings before the Chamber consist of two phases: written and oral. During the first phase, the number and order of the written pleadings is governed by the provisions of the special agreement, unless the Chamber, after ascertaining the views of the parties, decides otherwise. Upon the closure of the written phase, public hearings are organized. The Chamber then delivers its judgment. The written pleadings remain confidential during the written phase of the proceedings. They are made accessible to the public only on or after the opening of the oral proceedings, subject to a decision to that effect by the Chamber after it has consulted the parties.

The full text of the Order rendered by the President of the Chamber of the Court will shortly be available on the Court's website at the following address: **<http://www.icj-cij.org>**

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