



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Case concerning Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria
(Cameroon v. Nigeria)

Conclusion of the hearings on the issues of the jurisdiction of the Court
and the admissibility of Cameroon's claims

The Court ready to consider its Judgment

THE HAGUE, 11 March 1998. The public hearings in the present phase of the case concerning Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which started on 2 March 1998, were concluded today, enabling the Judges to start their deliberations. The Court has to decide whether it has jurisdiction to deal with the merits of the case and whether Cameroon's claims are admissible.

Nigeria contends that the Court has no jurisdiction in the matter and that the claims of Cameroon are not admissible.

Pursuant to Article 79 of its Rules, the Court has to decide on the preliminary objections before proceeding to the merits of the case.

During the hearings of 2-11 March, the delegation of Nigeria was led by H.E. Mr. Alhaji Abdullahi Ibrahim, Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Agent, and the delegation of Cameroon by H.E. Mr. Laurent Eso, Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals, Agent.

The Judgment concerning the preliminary objections raised by Nigeria, which will be final and without appeal, will be delivered in three to four months. It will be read during a public hearing at a date which will be announced in a forthcoming press release.

History of the dispute

On 29 March 1994, Cameroon filed an application instituting proceedings against Nigeria in a dispute concerning the question of sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula, which it claimed was in part militarily occupied by Nigeria, and requesting the Court to determine the course of the maritime frontier between the two States in so far as that frontier had not already been established by the Maroua Declaration signed by the Cameroonian and Nigerian Heads of State in 1975.

As a basis for the jurisdiction of the Court, Cameroon referred to the declarations made by both States by which they accept that jurisdiction as compulsory (Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the Court).

In an additional application filed on 6 June 1994, Cameroon extended the case to a further dispute with Nigeria over "a part of the territory of Cameroon in the area of Lake Chad", which it claimed was also occupied by Nigeria. Cameroon asked the Court to specify definitively the frontier between itself and Nigeria from Lake Chad to the sea, to enjoin the withdrawal of Nigerian troops from Cameroonian territory and to determine reparation for the material and non-material damage inflicted.

On 12 February 1996, Cameroon requested the Court to indicate provisional measures after "serious armed incidents" had taken place between Cameroonian and Nigerian forces in the Bakassi Peninsula. Public hearings were held between 5 and 8 March 1996, and on 15 March 1996, the Court delivered an Order indicating that "both Parties should ensure that no action of any kind, and particularly no action by their armed forces, is taken which might prejudice the rights of the other in respect of whatever judgment the Court may render in the case, or which might aggravate or extend the dispute before it". The ICJ also ruled that they "should observe the agreement reached between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Kara, Togo, on 17 February 1996, for the cessation of all hostilities in the Bakassi Peninsula".

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Internal Judicial Practice of the Court with respect to deliberations

As outlined in the Internal Judicial Practice of the Court with respect to deliberations, the Judges will soon hold a preliminary discussion at which the President will outline the issues which he considers require discussion and a decision by the Court.

After initial consideration, a full deliberation will be held during which, on the basis of the views expressed, a Drafting Committee will be chosen by secret ballot. That committee will consist of two Judges holding the majority view and the President if he shares that view.

The draft text will go through two readings. Meanwhile, Judges who wish to do so may prepare a separate or dissenting opinion.

The final vote will be taken after adoption of the final text in the second reading.

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NOTE FOR THE PRESS

The full transcripts of the hearings of 2-11 March can be found on the Website of the Court at the following address: <http://www.icj-cij.org>

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