



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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

The Court authorizes Equatorial Guinea to intervene in the case

THE HAGUE, 22 October 1999. By an Order of 21 October 1999 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) authorized Equatorial Guinea to intervene in the case concerning the Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria) "to the extent, in the manner and for the purposes set out in its Application for permission to intervene".

The Court took the decision unanimously.

In its Order, the Court fixed 4 April 2001 as the time-limit for the filing of a written statement by Equatorial Guinea and 4 July 2001 as the time-limit for the filing of written observations by Cameroon and by Nigeria on that statement.

Background information

On 30 June 1999 Equatorial Guinea filed an Application for permission to intervene in the above-mentioned case. It stated that the purpose of its intervention was "to protect [its] legal rights in the Gulf of Guinea by all legal means" and "to inform the Court of Equatorial Guinea's legal rights and interests so that these may remain unaffected as the Court proceeds to address the question of the maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria". Equatorial Guinea made it clear that it did not seek to intervene in those aspects of the proceedings that relate to the land boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria, nor to become a party to the case. It further stated that, although it would be open to the three countries to request the Court not only to determine the Cameroon-Nigeria maritime boundary but also to determine Equatorial Guinea's maritime boundary with these two States, Equatorial Guinea had made no such request and wished to continue to seek to determine its maritime boundary with its neighbours by negotiation.

In support of its Application, Equatorial Guinea stressed that one of the claims presented by Cameroon in its Memorial of 16 March 1995 "ignored the legal rights of Equatorial Guinea in the most flagrant way" because it disregarded the median line (the line dividing maritime zones between two States of which every point is equidistant from the coasts of each of those States) and that, moreover, "in the bilateral diplomacy between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon . . . never once hinted that it did not accept the median line as the maritime boundary between itself and Equatorial Guinea". Observing that "the general maritime area where the interests of Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria and Cameroon come together is an area of active oil and gas exploration and exploitation", Equatorial Guinea maintained that "any judgment extending the boundary between

Cameroon and Nigeria across the median line with Equatorial Guinea [would] be relied upon by concessionaires who would likely ignore Equatorial Guinea's protests and proceed to explore and exploit resources to the legal and economic detriment" of that country.

Under Article 83 of the Rules of Court, Equatorial Guinea's Application was immediately communicated to Cameroon and Nigeria, and the Court fixed 16 August 1999 as the time-limit for the filing of written observations by those States.

Reasoning of the Court

In its Order, the Court first states that in their written observations, neither Cameroon nor Nigeria objects to the Application by Equatorial Guinea for permission to intervene being granted.

The Court adds that "Equatorial Guinea has sufficiently established that it has an interest of a legal nature which could be affected by any judgment which the Court might hand down for the purpose of determining the maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria".

The Court therefore considers that, in view of the position of the Parties and the conclusions which it has reached, "there is nothing to prevent the Application by Equatorial Guinea . . . from being granted".

Since copies of the pleadings and documents as filed in the case at present have already been communicated to Equatorial Guinea, and since a copy of the Reply of Cameroon and of the Rejoinder of Nigeria, which the Court has directed them to submit, will also be so communicated, the Court finds it necessary to fix time-limits for the filing, respectively, of a written statement by Equatorial Guinea and written observations by Cameroon and by Nigeria on that statement. The Court adds that those time-limits must "so far as possible coincide with those already fixed for the pleadings in the case".

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

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