

AFRICAN UNION

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**3RD CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS
IN CHARGE OF BORDER ISSUES**

**NIAMEY, NIGER
17 MAY 2012**

AUBP/EXP-MIN/7 (5)

DECLARATION ON THE AFRICAN UNION BORDER PROGRAMME

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1. We, the Ministers of Member States of the African Union (AU) in charge of Border Issues, have held our 3rd Conference in Niamey, Niger, on 17 May 2012, to deliberate on the status of implementation the AU Border Programme (AUBP). Our Conference was preceded by a preparatory meeting of experts, from 14 to 16 May 2012. It also witnessed the participation, in its deliberations, for the first time, of the Republic of South Sudan, after its accession to independence in July 2011, which we warmly welcome.
2. Our Conference was held as the follow up to the implementation of Declarations BP/MIN/Decl.(II) and AUBP/EXP-MIN/7(II), issued at the end of the First and Second Conferences of African Ministers in charge of Border Issues, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 7 June 2007 and 25 March 2010, respectively, and the relevant decisions of the Executive Council and the Assembly of the Union. More generally, our Conference took place against the background of the implementation of the various resolutions and decisions adopted by African leaders on peace and security issues, as well as on regional integration.
3. We have reviewed the status of the implementation of the AUBP. In this regard, we welcome the gradual ownership of the Programme by the Member States and other stakeholders, for this is a prerequisite for attaining the AUBP objectives. We are also pleased that the AUBP, after an initial phase of popularisation and sensitization, has now entered an operational phase, marked by increased support for the delimitation and demarcation exercises, the promotion of cross-border cooperation and capacity building. We note with satisfaction the progress made in the field, with the multiplication of initiatives by the Member States to implement the various aspects of the AUBP, and the celebration, on 7 June 2011, of the First African Border Day.
4. We also note the emergence of new security challenges, as particularly illustrated by the crisis in the Sahelo-Saharan region, which, beyond the delimitation and demarcation of boundaries, highlight the need for States to ensure the effective control of their territories and to enhance inter-African cooperation in the field of border security. Similarly, we note, with concern, the persistent "thickness" of African borders, which largely explains the low rate of intra-African trade and the problems faced in the free movement of persons. These constraints weigh heavily on landlocked countries that depend greatly on major transport corridors for their international trade and, therefore, impede economic development efforts. Finally, the lack of delimitation of maritime boundaries constitutes a hindrance to the development of energy, fishery and other marine resources by the coastal states.
5. In this context, we stress the relevance of the principles underlying the AUBP, as stated in the relevant instruments of the AU, particularly the principle of the respect of borders existing at the time of accession of our countries to independence; the principle of peaceful settlement of border disputes; and the commitment to delimit and demarcate African boundaries, as factors of peace, security and economic and social progress.
6. In the light of the above, we reaffirm our commitment to make renewed efforts for the effective implementation of the different components of AUBP, aware as we are of the fact that clearly demarcated and well managed borders are necessary to maintain peace, security and stability, enhance economic integration, facilitate trade and transform borders from barriers to bridges, in particular through local cross-border cooperation initiatives.

7. At the same time, we recognise the huge tasks that have to be carried out to attain all the objectives we set for ourselves, as demonstrated by:

- i. the inadequate responses to the questionnaire that was sent to Member States within the framework of the survey on the status of African borders (five years after its launch, twenty-two Member States have not yet responded to the questionnaire), which does not make it possible to have a comprehensive view of delimitation and demarcation needs;
- ii. the fact, based on responses received to date, that only 35% of African borders are delimited and demarcated, while this operation was originally to be completed in 2012, in conformity with the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA);
- iii. the persistence of border disputes, which can degenerate into serious conflicts;
- iv. the low rate of cross-border cooperation, whether at local level or within the framework of large scale integration projects; and
- v. the inappropriate ratio between existing human capacity and technical and financial resources, considering the needs for the effective implementation of the AUBP.

8. We stress the need, given the current challenges, of integrated border management, to tackle, in a holistic way, development and security challenges in the border areas. We, therefore, encourage Member States to develop integrated national policies and strategies in this regard, and to establish, where appropriate, the necessary institutional structures. We request the Commission to finalise, as soon as possible, the strategy, currently being prepared, on integrated border management.

9. As part of such an approach, we reiterate the urgent need for the effective implementation of the various components of the AUBP.

On Delimitation, Demarcation and Reaffirmation of Boundaries:

10. Bearing in mind the need to do everything to successfully complete the delimitation and demarcation of African boundaries, where such an exercise has not yet taken place, in compliance with the new deadline of 2017 set by the Assembly of the Union, at its session in Malabo, in July 2011, we agree to the following:

- i. the completion of the collection of all the data for the survey of African borders by July 2012 at the latest. Member States, which have not yet done so are requested to respond to the questionnaire sent by the Commission within the time specified;
- ii. the submission by each Member State of an annual report on the progress made in the demarcation of its borders based on the format designed by the Commission;

- iii. the acceleration by the Member States of the delimitation and demarcation of their boundaries, where this exercise has not yet taken place, taking, if necessary, all appropriate legal, financial, institutional and other measures for this purpose, so as to comply with the new deadline of 2017. Likewise, we urge Member States involved in border disputes, to do everything for their early resolution, through peaceful means, with the support, if necessary, of the AU and other appropriate African mechanisms;
- iv. the adoption of concrete measures for regular maintenance and, where appropriate, the densification of boundary pillars, so as to make them more visible and consequently reduce the risk of disputes;
- v. the inclusion of a component on the destruction of antipersonnel mines in the delimitation and demarcation plan; and
- vi. the speedy finalisation of the Guide currently under preparation, on good practices in the delimitation and demarcation of boundaries.

On Cross-border cooperation:

11. For the purpose of attaining our strategic objective on cross-border cooperation, we agree on the following measures:

- i. the adoption of the AU Convention on cross-border cooperation. We call upon all the Member States to sign, ratify or accede to this Convention and ensure its rapid entry into force;
- ii. the effective implementation, by the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), of an exchange programme on cross-border cooperation among African states and other stakeholders;
- iii. the preparation by the AU Commission, in close collaboration with the RECs, of a Plan of Action to encourage and support local initiative cross-border cooperation, being understood that Member States will take all the necessary measures to facilitate this cooperation;
- iv. the enhancement of cross-border cooperation in the prevention and fight against terrorism, cross-border crime and other threats, including illegal fishing, piracy and other related acts, within the framework of the relevant instruments of the AU. In this regard, we stress the importance of sharing information and intelligence and the proper role of the African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT);
- v. the implementation and adoption, as appropriate, by Member States of measures aimed at reducing the time of transit and removing non-tariff barriers at the borders so as to facilitate easy movement of goods and persons, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the AU and the RECs;

- vi. the encouragement of joint management of transboundary resources, based on relevant African and international experiences;
- vii. the finalisation of the “Guide on Enhancing Cross-border Cooperation”, currently being prepared by the Commission; and
- viii. the application of specific arrangements to the situation of Island States.

On Capacity building:

12. Aware of the critical importance of capacity building, we have identified the following priorities:

- i. the acceleration of the implementation of the provisions agreed upon during our Second Conference, in particular regarding the inventory of experts and research and training institutions on the continent dealing with border issues, networking of existing institutions, both among themselves and between them and similar institutions outside Africa, and development of curricula and training programmes on border issues;
- ii. the establishment by the Member States, which have not yet done so, of National Boundary Commissions;
- iii. the organisation of training workshops for African border institutions. In this regard, we request our international partners, particularly the German Government through the GiZ, the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) and other bilateral and multilateral partners, to provide the necessary support; and
- iv. the adoption by the Commission of a more integrated approach, considering the multidimensional nature of the AUBP.

On the Popularisation of the AUBP

13. To enhance the popularisation of the AUBP and consequently facilitate ownership at all levels, we have agreed as follows:

- i. the preparation of a communication and sensitization plan to raise greater awareness about the AUBP and specify the respective roles of national, regional and continental partners; and
- ii. the adoption of practical measures by Member States to celebrate effectively the Africa Border Day.

On Partnership and Resource Mobilisation:

14. We express our gratitude to the international partners that support the AUBP and whose assistance has enabled us to achieve significant results. We, particularly, welcome the support from the German Government through the GiZ. We also appreciate the support of the United Kingdom regarding the demarcation of the border between The Sudan and South Sudan.

15. To strengthen existing partnerships, we have agreed as follows:

- i. the continuation and intensification of interaction with the international partners concerned, in particular the GiZ, the EU, the UN, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and other partners, to facilitate the exchange of experiences and mobilise their support;
- ii. the organisation, at the latest in December 2012, of the Conference on resource mobilisation to support the implementation of AUBP, to which the private sector shall be invited; and
- iii. the urgent establishment, pending the signing and entry into force of the AU Convention on Cross-border Cooperation, of a Fund to support the activities of the AUBP. In this respect, we call upon the Member States to contribute significantly to the funding of the AUBP.

On the Follow-up of this Declaration:

16. We request the Executive Council to endorse this Declaration. We call upon Member States, RECs and other stakeholders concerned to take the necessary measures for the implementation of the provisions of this Declaration.

17. We call upon the Commission to ensure the follow-up to this Declaration. In particular, we urge the Commission to finalise, in consultation with Member States and other stakeholders concerned, the Strategic Plan for the implementation of AUBP for the period 2013 to 2017.

18. We agree to hold our next Conference in 2014 to consider the status of the implementation of the AUBP and take any necessary action.