

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, B.P.: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PRESS RELEASE

FRANCE HANDS OVER ARCHIVES RELATING TO AFRICAN BORDERS

Addis Ababa, 29 November 2013: The Commission of the African Union (AU), has, today, received the true and complete copies of 45 Agreements relating to African borders, including maps and plans, signed by France between 1845 and 1956. The handing over of these documents took place during a ceremony, held at the AU Headquarters and attended by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, and the Ambassador of France to Ethiopia and to the AU, Brigitte Collet.

The collection of colonial archives on African borders is part of the follow-up to the Declaration adopted by the first meeting of African Ministers in charge of Border Issues, held in Addis Ababa, on 7 June 2007. On that occasion, and in the context of the partnership with the rest of the international community in support of the AU Border Programme (AUBP), the Ministers requested the former colonial powers to transmit information in their possession on the status of African borders. Subsequently, the Commission approached those powers which indicated their willingness to provide the necessary support. Germany has already transmitted the data in its possession, while Belgium, Portugal and the UK have confirmed their willingness to do the same.

Speaking at the ceremony, Commissioner Chergui thanked the French authorities for the cooperation extended to the AU and expressed the conviction that the documents submitted will contribute significantly to the achievement of the objectives assigned to AUBP regarding the delimitation and demarcation of African borders where such an exercise has not yet taken place. He looked forward to enhanced cooperation towards the implementation of the AUBP. On her part, Ambassador Collet stressed that the transmission by France of data in its possession was intended to be a practical contribution to the implementation of AUBP, within the framework of its overall cooperation with the AU.

The archives provided by the former colonial powers are accessible through the Border Information System (BIS) established by the AUBP to accelerate the process of delimitation and demarcation of African borders where such an exercise has not yet taken place. In accordance with the decision taken by the AU Summit held in Malabo in July 2011, this process should be completed by 2017.

Note to Editors:

The AUBP was launched in June 2007 during a ministerial meeting held in Addis Ababa. Two other ministerial meetings were held thereafter: in Addis Ababa, in March 2010, and in Niamey, in May 2012. The AUBP has three objectives: (i) facilitating the delimitation and demarcation of African borders where such an exercise has not yet taken place; (ii) promoting cross-border cooperation as part of an overall approach focusing on the structural prevention and the deepening of regional and continental integration; and (iii) strengthening the capacity of Member States and mobilize the necessary resources for the implementation of the AUBP.

Since the launch of AUBP, the Commission has taken a number of steps to achieve these objectives, including through:

- supporting the delimitation and demarcation of borders. Several African countries have benefited from this support. To this end, the Commission has launched a PanAfrican survey to get an accurate idea of the delimitation and demarcation status of African borders. Nearly two-thirds of African borders are not yet defined, thus creating potential sources of conflict and impeding regional integration;
- launching several initiatives in the field of cross-border cooperation. In addition, the 3rd Conference of African Ministers in charge of Border Issues adopted an AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation; and
- assisting Member States to strengthen their capacity, including the establishment, as appropriate, of National Boundary Commissions.

The German Government, through the GiZ, is providing significant financial and technical support to the AUBP. The United Kingdom has extended support to the AUBP efforts regarding the border issues between Sudan and South Sudan. Other partnerships have been or are in the process of being developed.