

FROM BARRIERS TO BRIDGES

Uniting and integrating Africa through borders which function as bridges for peace, security and development

Since African countries gained independence, the borders – drawn in the wake of 19th century colonialism – have been recurrent sources of conflicts and disputes on the continent. Most of the borders are poorly defined. Approximately two-thirds of the 83,500 km of African land boundaries are neither clearly delimited nor demarcated. The location of strategic natural resources in cross-border areas poses additional challenges. Non-demarcated boundaries are a factor for contention between states and local populations, and a threat for peace and security on the African continent.

Respect for our States' territorial integrity is a prerequisite for peace and security. The African Union Border Programme (AUBP) is a direct response to the challenge of existing and potential border disputes in Africa. It operates in conformity with the principles of subsidiarity and of respect for the intangibility of African borders as they existed upon achievement of independence, enshrined in legal and political frameworks such as Resolution 16(I) of the July 1964 Cairo Declaration, promulgated by the Organisation of African Unity, and the Constitutive Act of the African Union (Article 4 (b)). The AUBP explicitly pursues the structural prevention of conflicts alongside the integration of African States.

The first ever Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues was held in Addis Ababa on 7th June 2007. This Conference resulted in the adoption of the first Declaration on the AUBP and its implementation modalities, followed by the second (Addis Ababa, 2010) and the third Declaration, along with the formulation of the AU **Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation**, the so-called *Niamey Convention* (Niamey, 17th May 2012). Furthermore, the 7th of June is commemorated annually through the celebration of the "African Border Day".

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In sum, aside from assisting its Member States in the delimitation and demarcation of their borders, the AUBP aims to create new dynamics of cross-border cooperation through:

- Enhancement of good-neighbourly relations on the regional, bilateral and local level
- Peaceful and negotiated settlement of border disputes, and joint management of possible cross-border resources
- Multiplication and dissemination of cross-border cooperation projects through joint initiatives, e.g. shared grain storage systems (food security), micro-credits for women (gender-oriented development), professional training centres for adolescents (fight against unemployment), basic service infrastructure (land use planning), etc.
- Capacity building, notably training on the use of technical equipment, provision of freely downloadable AUBP guidebooks (<http://www.aubis.peaceau.org/guide-books-and-documents-african-borders>)
- Establishment of national/bilateral boundary commissions, and promotion of joint border management in the realms of security, economic development, customs, trade, migration etc. with the ultimate goal of African integration.

The AUBP is located within the Department of Peace and Security of the African Union Commission; Division for the Structural Prevention of Conflicts.

African Union Border Programme T +251 115 513 822
P.O. Box 3243 F +251 115 519 321
Roosevelt Street E situationroom@africa-union.org
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia I www.aubis.peaceau.org

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African Union Border Programme (AUBP)



Delimitation and Demarcation of all African Borders, which have not yet been demarcated, by 2017

The AUBP assists the Member States of the AU in all issues relating to the delimitation, demarcation and management of their borders. In this vein, the Programme supports those States having requested assistance, in the set-up of national or joint boundary commissions, and in the mobilisation of the necessary resources and expertise needed to delimit, demarcate and reaffirm African boundaries by the deadline of 2017, agreed upon at the 17th Ordinary Session of the AU, held in Malabo in 2011.



Field visit and inspection of boundary beacons at the Malawi-Mozambique border.

Cross-Border Cooperation

Cross-border municipalities and populations are the primary drivers and beneficiaries of cross-border cooperation. The AUBP is working closely with the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and with Member States to facilitate local initiatives which promote the development of cross-border areas. In May 2012, the **Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation**, the so-called *Niamey Convention*, was formulated during the Third Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues. In addition to this, the AUBP plays a coordination role and facilitates the exchange of experience and good practice regarding cross-border cooperation initiatives. In this context, the first Cross-Border Health Centre of its kind in Africa, established with support from the AUBP and the German Cooperation through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, was inaugurated at the border between Burkina Faso and Mali in 2012. This cross-border infrastructure constitutes a milestone between two States having previously engaged in armed conflicts, now united by the joint objective of peaceful coexistence and development for the direct benefit of both States' local communities.



Burkina Faso-Mali border: Celebration upon the placement of the last boundary beacon and of the foundation stone of the Cross-Border Health Centre.

Capacity Building

The AUBP assists its Member States in the development of capacities concerning all areas of border management in collaboration with relevant institutions, such as African universities, professional training centres and specialised institutes. In practice, the AUBP has facilitated various trainings and workshops related to delimitation and demarcation, on the one hand, and boundary information systems, on the other. Thus, the AUBP aims to provide broad access to skills training and knowledge linked to border management, also in the context of its significance in the technical, legal and economic realm.

Besides, the AUBP has obtained all historical archives related to African borders from the former colonial powers. These archives are accessible for all Member States for the purpose of consultation.



Training workshop on the use of GPS equipment with participants from Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia under the supervision of the AUBP and GIZ.