



INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

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Press Release

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Land and Maritime Delimitation and Sovereignty over Islands (Gabon/Equatorial Guinea)

The Court delivers its Judgment on the merits

THE HAGUE, 19 May 2025. The International Court of Justice today delivered its Judgment on the merits in the case concerning *Land and Maritime Delimitation and Sovereignty over Islands (Gabon/Equatorial Guinea)*.

It is recalled that proceedings were instituted on 5 March 2021 by way of a [Special Agreement](#) between Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in which the Parties submitted to the Court a dispute concerning the “delimitation of their common maritime and land boundaries” and “sovereignty over the islands of Mbanié/Mbañe, Cocotiers/Cocoteros and Conga”.

In its Judgment, the Court observes that it has not been asked to delimit the land and maritime boundaries or determine sovereignty over the islands of Mbanié/Mbañe, Cocotiers/Cocoteros and Conga, but only to determine whether the legal titles, treaties and international conventions invoked by the Parties have the force of law in their relations in so far as they concern the dispute between them, the subject of which is set forth in Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Special Agreement. The Court notes that the Parties disagree on the interpretation of the term “legal titles” in the said provision and on the applicability of specific instruments. In particular, the Parties disagree on the question whether the document entitled “Convention delimiting the land and maritime frontiers of Equatorial Guinea and Gabon” (the “Bata Convention”), invoked by Gabon, is a treaty having the force of law in the relations between the Parties with regard to the dispute.

In the operative clause of its [Judgment](#), which is final, without appeal and binding on the Parties, the Court:

“THE COURT,

(1) By fourteen votes to one,

Finds that the document entitled ‘Convention delimiting the land and maritime frontiers of Equatorial Guinea and Gabon’ (‘Bata Convention’) invoked by the Gabonese Republic is not a treaty having the force of law in the relations between the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and does not constitute a legal title within the meaning of Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Special Agreement;

IN FAVOUR: *Vice-President* Sebutinde, *Acting President*; *President* Iwasawa; *Judges* Tomka, Abraham, Yusuf, Xue, Nolte, Charlesworth, Brant, Gómez Robledo, Cleveland, Aurescu, Tladi; *Judge ad hoc* Wolfrum;

AGAINST: *Judge ad hoc* Pinto;

(2) Unanimously,

Finds that the legal titles invoked by the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea that have the force of law in the relations between them in so far as they concern the delimitation of their common land boundary are the titles held on 17 August 1960 by the French Republic and on 12 October 1968 by the Kingdom of Spain on the basis of the Special Convention on the delimitation of French and Spanish possessions in West Africa, on the coasts of the Sahara and the Gulf of Guinea, signed in Paris on 27 June 1900, to which titles the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea respectively succeeded;

(3) By thirteen votes to two,

Finds that, of the legal titles invoked by the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the title that has the force of law in the relations between them in so far as it concerns sovereignty over the islands of Mbanié/Mbañe, Cocotiers/Cocoteros and Conga is the title held by the Kingdom of Spain on 12 October 1968, to which the Republic of Equatorial Guinea succeeded;

IN FAVOUR: *Vice-President* Sebutinde, *Acting President*; *President* Iwasawa; *Judges* Tomka, Abraham, Yusuf, Nolte, Charlesworth, Brant, Gómez Robledo, Cleveland, Aurescu, Tladi; *Judge ad hoc* Wolfrum;

AGAINST: *Judge* Xue; *Judge ad hoc* Pinto;

(4) Unanimously,

Finds that the Special Convention on the delimitation of French and Spanish possessions in West Africa, on the coasts of the Sahara and the Gulf of Guinea, signed in Paris on 27 June 1900, constitutes a legal title within the meaning of Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Special Agreement to the extent that it has established the terminus of the land boundary between the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, which shall be the starting-point of the maritime boundary delimiting their respective maritime areas;

(5) Unanimously,

Finds that the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is an international convention that has the force of law in the relations between the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, within the meaning of Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Special Agreement, in so far as that Convention concerns the delimitation of their maritime boundary.”

Judge YUSUF appends a separate opinion to the Judgment of the Court; Judges XUE and AURESCU append declarations to the Judgment of the Court; Judge TLADI appends a separate opinion to the Judgment of the Court; Judge *ad hoc* WOLFRUM appends a declaration to the Judgment of the Court; Judge *ad hoc* PINTO appends a dissenting opinion to the Judgment of the Court.

A summary of the Judgment appears in the document entitled “Summary [2025/3](#)”, to which summaries of the opinions and declarations are annexed. This summary and the full text of the Judgment are available on the [case page](#) on the Court’s website.

Earlier [press releases](#) relating to these proceedings are also available on the Court’s website.

Note: The Court’s press releases are prepared by its Registry for information purposes only and do not constitute official documents.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Charter in June 1945 and began its activities in April 1946. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected for a nine-year term by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). The Court has a twofold role: first, to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States; and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and agencies of the system.

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