

Venezuela, Guyana Agree to UN Mediation in Essequibo Dispute

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Venezuela and Guyana will send their respective ambassadors back to their diplomatic missions, after the neighboring country's agreed to United Nations mediation Sunday.

The move comes after a meeting chaired by the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon between Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and Guyanese counterpart David Granger, at the headquarters of the U.N. General Assembly in New York City.

Ban confirmed that the U.N. will send a technical committee Venezuela in the coming days to assess Venezuela's claim to the Essequibo region.

The commission, which is being sent under the Geneva Agreement, will "undertake a comprehensive assessment on the circumstances of the Essequibo and then set a deadline for resolving the conflict through regular channels," Maduro added.

The disputed border between Venezuela and Guyana goes back to Venezuela's own independence battle, which was finally achieved in 1821. The precise boundaries were disputed by newly independent Venezuela – which always regarded the entire area west of the Essequibo River as its border – and the United Kingdom.

A series of dubious studies and agreements culminated in a 1966 agreement between Venezuela and the Guyana, which had just achieved independence, where the two neighbors agreed to postpone settlement of the disputed territory. In May, tensions flared as Granger's

newly elected government unilaterally gave an oil concession to Exxon, leading Venezuela to call the incident a provocation.

Describing the meeting as "complex, tense and difficult," Maduro nonetheless said Venezuela has a "brotherhood" with Guyana and proposed staying in constant contact with Granger.

"I'm going to start communicating with President Granger (...) We want brotherly relations with Guyana," said Maduro. "For many differences we may have, our people are destined to the brotherhood."

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