

Banda engages media over border dispute with Tanzania

President Joyce Banda last week engaged media managers to try to reason with them to project positive reporting over the border dispute that has ensued between Malawi and Tanzania.

 By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi 17 Aug 2012

Across the border, their media has been reporting on how the Tanzanian defence force is mobilizing soldiers along the border preparing for war, something which the Malawi president said will not happen and asked the media not to give residents along the border unnecessary panic through their reporting.

At the meeting with the media managers president Banda declared that Malawi will not go to war with Tanzania despite the two countries' disagreements over the boundary along Lake Malawi.

Tanzania started disputing the boundary after Malawi engaged consultants to carry out oil exploration in the lake.

Also in attendance during the meeting were officials from Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-Malawi and Media Council of Malawi.

No reason to talk of war

President Banda asked the Malawi media to report that neither Malawi nor Tanzania should be involved in war-mongering after media reports from both in Malawi and Tanzania speculated that the two nations could start war over the border issue.

At the moment the two nations are holding diplomatic discussions over the matter and she also disclosed that she is going to hold diplomatic talks with president Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania over the issue in Mozambique next week where the two leaders will be attending SADC Heads of State Summit.

"Much as it is a well-known fact that the lake belongs to Malawi, we will engage our Tanzanian counterparts and resolve our differences diplomatically and amicably," she said.

She told the local media to report that there is no reason why officials and citizens of the two nations should be talking of war when many channels of resolving the matter including even the legal route have not yet been explored and exhausted.

President Banda insisted that even if the diplomatic route fails, it does not necessarily mean Malawi will go to war with her brothers and sisters in Tanzania. because we can resort to other channels to solve the matter, she explained.

Officials of the two countries who will meet in Malawi's northern city of Mzuzu on Monday, 20 August to discuss the matter.

The boundary differences between the two countries date back to the colonial era and refuse to die as the resurface time and again. Malawi is insisting that it owns Lake Malawi based on a treaty and agreements at both African Union and its predecessor the Organization of African Unity.

This has also been strengthened by Foreign Affairs Minister Ephraim Chiume, who told the media that there are a number of treaties indicating that Malawi owns the lake. One of such treaties is the 1 July 1890, Anglo-Germany Treaty.

Chiume said the Tanzanian's claims are therefore surprising as there is a clear historical and geographic description on the border.

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