



Key messages from Sao Tome and Principe to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) has taken the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development as the basis of its development policy, to enable Santomeans to have a better future, in balance with their natural ecosystems.

In recent years the country has made significant progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially in the health and education sectors, which are key areas for the development of human capital. STP has consistently reduced maternal and infant mortality rates, and communicable diseases, including malaria, which is no longer the main cause of mortality. Concerning education, the country has achieved gender parity in basic education and has been achieving high schooling rates at different levels. These results have contributed to the graduation of the country from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) category, foreseen for December 2024.

However, as a Small Island State (SIDS) and one of the smallest economies in Africa, STP still faces many challenges in its efforts towards sustainable development, especially in terms of human and financial resources, necessary to implement the 2030 Agenda. On the other hand, given its archipelagic nature and location, STP remains highly vulnerable to climate change. Indeed, in recent years, STP has been faced with rising sea levels, deforestation, intense and uncontrolled rainfall, floods, and landslides, with a devastating effect on food crops production and exports. Furthermore, there has been a decrease in precipitation, with negative impacts for water supply.

These development issues hamper activities linked to the agriculture, tourism and fishing sectors, movement of people and goods, with devastating impacts on the economy and directly endanger the lives of the populations.

The combination of the impacts of external shocks, namely the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia War, impose a pressing need for STP to build resilience and strengthen human capital development, either through adaptation and mitigation measures or through structural transformation and economic diversification.

This scenario requires the country to redouble its efforts to achieve the SDGs, especially by strengthening technical and institutional capacity and building more resilient socio-economic infrastructures, which requires substantial resources that, unfortunately, the country does not have. STP advocates that global action is needed to combat climate change, supporting the leadership shown by the SIDS, particularly in renewable energy.

With a maritime territory 160 times larger than the land surface, the sea can become the main driver of development for STP. Aware of the importance of activities linked to the oceans, STP has developed a Blue Economy Transition Strategy. However, exploiting the potential for promoting the blue economy requires the country to strengthen good governance and transparency,



consolidate the democratic rule of law and, in a joint effort with the international community, create the conditions to address insecurity and combat maritime crime, especially maritime piracy and illegal fishing.

Considering the costs associated with insularity, STP advocates for a greater attention, or even positive discrimination, and strong support from the International Community in order to implement the 2030 Agenda successfully and inclusively. The country has been introducing policy measures, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and others are planned, to attract new partners and to explore innovative financing mechanisms, strengthen South-South cooperation, and enable it to effectively achieve the SDGs.

STP will soon integrate the Middle-Income Countries category but considering its insularity factor and the inherent effects of the LDC graduation, it calls on development partners to guarantee the continuity of the different forms of external support, with a view to continuing and sustaining the trajectory of sustainable development.

To accelerate the process of achieving the SDGs by 2030, STP is strongly committed to improving the national development plan, the production of data that respond to the indicators through the establishment and domestication of a national SDG indicator framework, investing in economic diversification, reforming the justice system, generating sufficient wealth to reduce current levels of poverty and social inequalities, improving resilience to the effects of climate change, identifying and defining public policies targeted at the most vulnerable social classes that are lagging behind and preventing anyone from being left behind.