

**Embassy of India
Sao Tome and Principe**

...

Brief on India-Sao Tome & Principe Bilateral Relations

Brief Historic Background

Sao Tome was uninhabited before the arrival of Portuguese in 1470. The Portuguese came to São Tomé in search of land to grow sugarcane. There was a slave revolt in 1595 which was soon subjugated. The city served as the capital of the Portuguese colony of São Tomé and Príncipe. STP achieved independence from the Portuguese in 1975.

Diplomatic Relations

India and Sao Tome and Principe (STP) have generally enjoyed warm and friendly relations, particularly after 1975 (post-STP independence era). Sao Tome was accredited to our Mission in Angola since 2008. Resident Mission in Sao Tome officially started functioning from September 21, 2020 and moved to its regular accommodation on 24th April 2021. Ambassador assumed charge on 30th July 2021.

High Level visits from India to STP

MoS (AYUSH), Shri Shripad Yesso Naik visited Sao Tome and Principe in August 2015 as special envoy to PM for extending IAFS III invitation.

Mr. M.J. Akbar, Minister of State of External Affairs visited Sao Tome on March 13-15, 2018, and met President, Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Sao Tome. He held bilateral discussion with the Sao Tomean delegates. During the visit, Agreement on Economic Cooperation, MOU on Cooperation on Traditional Medicine, and MOU on Cooperation on Medicinal Plants were signed.

High level visits from STP to India

Dr. Carlos Alberto Pires Tiny, STP Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation & Communities visited India from November 29 to December 2, 2009. This was the first high level visit on either side since the island nation got its independence from Portugal in 1975. During his visit, the Sao Tomean Foreign Minister held extensive discussions with Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for External Affairs. Both the Ministers signed a Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations.

STP Prime Minister, Dr. Patrice Emery Trovoada visited India in October 2015 to participate in the Third India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) and held bilateral talks with PM Modi on 28 October 2015 and sought assistance of India in developing Sao Tome's infrastructure and agriculture sector. The delegation was led by the Prime Minister Mr. Patrice Trovoada and included the Foreign Minister.

Mr. Alfonso da Graca Varela, Minister of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Parliamentary Affairs visited India to participate in the first International Solar Alliance (ISA) Summit held in New Delhi on March 11, 2018.

STP Foreign Minister Mr. Urbino Botelho visited India on September 8, 2018, to sign the Framework Agreement on Space Cooperation.

A 3-member defence delegation led by H.E. Mr. Oscar Aguiar Sacramento e Sousa, Minister of Defence and Internal Order, Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe participated in the DEFEXPO 2020 and the “India Africa Defence Ministers Meet”, in Lucknow from February 05-08, 2020.

Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism

During the visit of Mr. M.J. Akbar, Minister of State of External Affairs to Sao Tome on March 13-15, 2018, Agreements on Economic Cooperation, MOU on Cooperation on Traditional Medicine, and MOU on Cooperation on Medicinal Plants were signed.

STP has also signed the Framework Agreement on ISA on February 8, 2018 and ratified the same. The Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Exploration and Uses of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes was signed between the two countries on September 7, 2018.

Foreign Office Consultations

A Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations between India and STP was signed on 01st December 2009, during the visit of then STP Foreign Minister Dr Carlos Alberto Pires Tiny.

Cooperation in UN & International Organizations, Reforms, UNSC:

STP has consistently supported India in elections to numerous multilateral fora including India’s membership to the Executive Council of UNESCO in 2017. Recognizing the pioneering role played by India in promoting South-South Cooperation and its significant contribution in international peace-keeping, STP announced its support for India to become a Permanent Member of an expanded UNSC.

STP extended instant support to India’s Resolution in the UNGA on the establishment of a Memorial Wall for Fallen United Nations Peacekeepers and electronically endorsed the Resolution in June 2023 (as, at present, Sao Tome does not have a physical representational office in UNGA, New York).

STP has also extended support for India's bid for non-permanent seat in UNSC for the term 2028-29.

Defence Cooperation

A 3-member Defence delegation led by H.E. Mr. Oscar Aguiar Sacramento e Sousa, Minister of Defence and Internal Order, Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe participated in the DEFEXPO 2020 and the “India Africa Defence Ministers Meet”, in Lucknow from February 05-08, 2020.

Development Partnership – LOC, Grants, Projects

Government of India had announced a grant of Line of Credit Lines of Credit for US \$ 1 mn. For setting up a Technology Incubation-cum-Production Center for development of SME sector and US \$ 5 mn. For priority projects to be identified by the STP side in agriculture, infrastructure, and capacity building. Both LOCs have remained unutilized by Sao Tome. STP authorities have expressed interest in reviving the LOC. India also announced another grant of INR 10 mn. (approx. US\$ 140,000) for meeting immediate requirements in education and health sectors.

The Framework Agreement on the establishment of a telemetry earth station was signed in 2018. Land for this project has been allocated by STP. Progress has been made in the finalization of the implementing agreement for this project.

Sao Tome and Principe became the 47th country to join the Government of India's Pan-African e-Network Project, E-Vidhya Bharati and E-Aarogya Bharati (E-VBAB), under the IAFS-I decision. Inclusion of Sao Tome in Phase II of the e-Network Project is under consideration.

Commercial, Economic and Trade – with latest figure (2021-22)

The trade between India and STP is negligible. Main items of imports have been pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, cotton and optical, photographic, medical instruments etc. Total bilateral trade as 2021-22 data, stood at US\$ 2.1 million, with India exporting goods worth US\$ 2.1 million and no imports from STP. This represents a 44% growth over 2020_21 and 34% over 2019_20. The Embassy organized the India Sao Tome Economic Forum on 25 February 2022 in collaboration of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Sao Tome and the Department of Commerce, STP. 30 businessmen from Sao Tome participated.

Trade relations for 2022-23 continued at the same level with balance of trade in favour of India. Major stumbling blocks for boosting trade are poor connectivity, high cost of transshipment of goods and tiny size of domestic consumer market.

Humanitarian Assistance

India gifted 150 computers to Sao Tome and Principe in November 2019 towards IT upgradation of the Ministries and secondary schools.

Donation of medicines worth Euro 95,000 (approx. USD 111,150) from Government of India was handed over to the Sao Tome Health Minister, Dr. Edgar Neves, on 4th June 2021, donation of life-saving drugs as well as generic medicines to the tune of US \$ 25,000 was handed over to Sao Tome in June, 2023 as per their requirement.

A proposal for donation six school buses to Sao Tome are under active consideration by GOI.

A proposal for donation of 1000 MT of rice is also under active consideration by GOI.

ITEC Assistance

STP has been allocated 5 slots under ITEC programme, annually. So far, the slots have not been utilized by STP, especially due to the pandemic situation.

ICCR Scholarship

5 slots have been allotted for STP. In 2019, one slot was utilized by a citizen of STP.

Cultural Cooperation

A 7-member cultural delegation from Sao Tome participated in the 35th Suraj Kund International Crafts Mela 2022 held in April 2022. Study in India, ITEC Day and Ayurveda Day were celebrated. Local Yoga institutions partnered with Embassy in organizing weekly yoga classes from March to May 2022. The International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Sao Tome on 18 June 2022.

Indian Community & Consular services

There was a small Indian community in STP until 1961 which moved away to other countries during the liberation of Goa. Today there are between 15 to 20 Indian citizens working in STP in food sector. Indian traders settled in neighboring countries visit São Tomé & Príncipe for trading occasionally.

August, 2023