

Introductory letter

Introduction

São Tomé, 20 January 2015

Dear Secretary General,

On behalf of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in São Tomé and Príncipe, I am delighted to submit to you the 2014 report of the UN Resident Coordinator System.

The report takes stock of the accomplishments of the United Nations System in São Tomé and Príncipe that have resulted from collaborative and joint actions and progress made towards the third year of the implementation of the UNDAF 2012-2016 and its action plan. Furthermore, 2015 is the fourth year of the UNDAF 2012-2016, the report presents the 2015 work plan that promotes collective efforts of the United Nations agencies and sustains the momentum of the UN reform agenda in the country to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and prepare the authorities to understand the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) for better support to mainstream the SDGs into national development priorities. This year is the last year for the MDGs, therefore more activities related to monitor of MDGs will be carried out.

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Politics, Economy and social services

The demographic situation is characterized by a population of 178,739 persons, from which 50.3% of Women and 49.7% of men. 61% of the population has less than 25 years. The live Esperance is 65 ans for both sexes. This shows that the population is relatively young. However, more than 67% of the population is living in urban areas against 33% in the rural areas. The average annual growth of the population is estimated at 2.5% in 2013.

The political situation is marked by the realization of highly disputed legislative, municipal, and regional elections on October 12, 2014. The results gave the Independent Democratic Action (ADI) a resounding win over the other parties. The parliamentary and municipality elections gave the ADI with 33 of the 55 seat of the national assembly and victory on five of the six districts. The process was considered free and fair by the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) who was tasked with monitoring the election. The 24-member mission was led by Prof. Angolan França Van-Dúnem, There was also an observation mission from the Community of Portuguese Langue Countries (CPLP). The CPLP report stated that the elections were "transparent, free and fair, and were conducted in an orderly manner. Both Observer missions mentioned that there were some incidents, but that they were unlikely to affect the final results. In that circumstances, and after the elected Parliament was inaugurated the ADI was invited to form the XVI government. Consequently the President has appointed M. Patrice Trovoada as Prime Minister, who has formed his Government composed of 13 Ministers out of which only one woman.

The elected government will run the country for a mandate of 4 years. Up to date the State Budget is not yet done. The Government are now engaged into a participative budget process. Therefore, the Government has started visiting every district in order to come closer to the citizens for capturing better their problems, which could be highlighting in the budget of the priority of the communities. The program of the new Government was recently approved by the National Assembly. Probably, the budget could come into function by earlier February or March.

The 2014 Ibrahim Mo index ranks the country at 12th out of 52 countries, first in the Central Africa Region and second in the group of the Portuguese speaking countries, with a bit increment of the score from 59 to 59.7 in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The Transparency International ranked, in terms of the corruption perception index, the country as 76th over 177 countries with the same score as that of 2013 42 points. This shows that the country has decreased in terms of ranking from 72th to 76th that means that a loss of 4 positions. However, STP is trying to be on the path of good governance comparatively to the last ten years. Indeed, the Government of Gabriel Ferreira da Costa appointed by the president Pinto Das Costa on December 10th, 2012, has faced many problems up to the nomination of Patrice Trovaoda whose party has won the legislative election.

Economic Situation: Sao Tome and Principe like other small Island Developing State is highly Economical vulnerable to exogenous shocks. In recent years, food shortages as well as the ongoing international economic and financial crisis have negatively affected the country. Despite this vulnerability, with the support of its development partners, the country has managed to gradually adopt more prudent fiscal and monetary policies that are promoting economic growth

Sao Tome and Principe has registered significant improvements in human development front. It ranks, (Medium Human Development Index), 144th out of 186 countries in UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), higher than the average in Sub-Saharan Africa and with consistently improving indicators. Great strides have been made in education and health outcomes. Recent achievements include a sharp decline in maternal and child mortality rates due in large part to an increase in the proportion of births attended by skilled birth attendants. Important progress has been achieved in the fight against malaria, with a record low incidence as well as HIV/AIDS prevalence at less than 1.5%. São Tomé and Príncipe has also registered excellent progress in education, especially in primary education. The country is on track to achieving primary education completion rate at 97%. Secondary education does not yet have universal coverage with supply limited to main urban areas.

Despite those remarkable achievements, the country is rated a Fragile State as assessed using the Multilateral Development Bank measurement, which is based mainly on the country's economic vulnerability and insularity. Mainly it is the vulnerability to unpredictable shocks, such as food shortages, and the impact of climate change. With limited progress in poverty reduction, unemployment continues to be high, especially among women and youth population, and pockets of chronic malnutrition and reduced but still important infant mortality rates that remains a concern

However, one should also recognize the positive economic performance that led São Tomé and Príncipe to be classified by the World Bank in 2013 as a middle-income country because its gross national income per capita surpassed the cut-off point of USD 1205 for the third consecutive year. The economy of the country has grown by 5% in 2014, up from 4.3% in 2013. In the medium term, the economy is expected to improve slightly, with projected real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 5% in 2014 and 5.6% in 2015, largely due to a moderate increase in foreign direct investment (FDI), notably from bilateral partners. The service sector remained the driving force of the economy, accounting for about 60% of GDP in 2012, followed by agriculture (22.5%). The country's economic performance was rated satisfactory in the second review of the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) 2012-15 agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), undertaken in September 2013.

Annual inflation has continued to decline since the adoption of the fixed exchange rate regime, falling to 6.3 percent in 2014 (its lowest level in two decades). Annual inflation could reach low single digits sooner than expected, if the current disinflation trend holds. Central Bank's international reserves stand comfortably above 3 months of imports. In the context of the fixed exchange rate regime, the Government would strengthen the resilience of the economy to shocks, bolster the financial system, foster sustainable medium-term economic growth, and reduce external debt vulnerabilities

Summary of Progress on joined up work

HIGHLIGHTS ON PROGRESS ON JOINED UP WORK:

1) Support to the national Government in the advancing the achievement of the Millennium Declaration/MDG, and activities related to the post 2015 agenda

2014 marked the third year of implementation of the UNDAF and its action plan which brings together all the programs of cooperation of the UN Agencies working with the Government and civil society of São Tomé and Príncipe under one single Country Program covering all UN development activities in the country and fully aligned with the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2012- 2016. The UNDAF continues to strengthen collaborative partnerships to ensure that UN assistance will be fully in support of the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2012- 2016 and the new government program goals in a coherent, consistent and integrated manner. The country has also presented the new vision 2030 drawn from the different national consultation held in 2013. This vision was worldwide discussed during a national dialogue chaired by the President and which gather around 1.000 participants (National stakeholders from the different spheres of the country, including the development partners and the STP diaspora). All these documents are aligned with the UNDAF.

The UN in Sao Tomé and Príncipe has continued to play a critical role in supporting the Government to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A good part of the UN's work in the country relates to strengthening MDG awareness through advocacy, supporting MDG costing and monitoring through the development of monitoring systems and helping integrate MDGs into development processes. The Country has also organized the national consultations on post 2015 development agenda, which report has served as basis for the vision 2030. In the Country of Domestication of the post 2015 development agenda, the Country has received support from UNDP-RBA to support the country into the organize its First National Dialogue and its First Economist forum.

In terms of advocacy, local newspapers, radio stations and the national television were at various points used to expand popular awareness about the MDGs. Major advocacy initiatives were started in 2014 including the preparation of the national Millennium Development Goals Report, publication of a press release on the MDG Summit and distribution of key outcome documents from the Summit to national and development partners and influencing members of the country' society.

With the support of the United Nations system, the country successfully completed the MICS 6 in August 2014. The process has started and the results will be presented earlier 2015. Indeed, the results of the census indicate a 2.6% annual population growth rate meaning that a reduction from 3.18% from the previous census of 2001. The population of São Tomé and Príncipe has increased from 137,599 persons 2001 to 178,739 persons in 2014.

To accelerate progress on reducing maternal mortality rate, the infant mortality and malaria, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis prevalence rates, the UNCT has and will be working with Government on the

Prioritized Action Plan to identify the bottlenecks and prioritize intervention to accelerate progress on these issues. The UNCT has supported the country to formulate the first CEDAW report. Such action the RC has played a highly advocacy role on the importance of having this document for the country, placing the importance on the Gender issues.

During 2013, government further intensified its efforts on Poverty Eradication strategy and has developed a robust monitoring and evaluation system to measure the effectiveness of the strategy which is a set of programs for fighting poverty nationwide. This has provided timely information which has assisted the United Nations system to strategically collaborate with government in these efforts.

2) Support to the national Government in integrating a human rights based approach into national development progress

For the programming cycle, 4 strategic outcome areas were identified to address national challenges and priorities: 1) promoting good governance, consolidating the rule of law and institutional strengthening; 2) reducing vulnerability and improving living conditions of the population in improving their access to basic social services; 3) promoting new growth opportunities, development of income generating activities, job creation and food security; and 4) environmental sustainability and disaster management. Such process has created the space for joint activities will take place during the coming period.

The UNCT has organized a couple of workshop for capacity building in the area of the integration of the human rights based approach into the national plan and strategy. With the collaboration of UNDP, OHCHR and UNFPA, the country was able to compile the CEDAW's report integrating the human rights dimension.

3) Progress on preparedness, crisis and post-crisis transition results achieved in cooperation with UN peacekeeping, peace building, political, and humanitarian actors.

The UN "Disaster" working group jointly supported the drafting of the first national strategy for disaster management, the national contingency plan for humanitarian action and the first-ever simulation on disaster response. It is within this context the UNCT was able to support the Government in the shortest period of time to design, approve and implement a national Plan and Protocol for a response to the Ebola Virus.

Results of joined up approaches

New Partnership in 2014: The UNCT's role in supporting the Government's efforts to improve the good governance in the country was instrumental in guiding and supporting the Judicial system through steps within the justice reform, capacity building and policy dialogue amongst the political parties, the Government, and the National Parliament as well as with the organized Civil Society. Such involvement has enabled the National Electoral Commission to prepare, organize successful the electoral census and the legislative and municipalities' elections.

Therefore there is a new partnership formed with Timor Lest in order to support the Government in area of justice reform where UNDP is at front.

Joint Resource Mobilization: The RC has led the initiative to establish the first large meeting with the Development Partners, building not only the Government ability to Coordinate but ensuring that ODA is channeled to the most important areas of socio economic development.

It has also led to the country to implement the Busan agenda, the UNCT has support the government to participate to a high level meeting in Mexico. It is now clear that the Government is committed to put in place an institutional framework for managing and coordinating the ODA. The efforts on UNCT in having a joint resource mobilization approved by all the agencies is undergoing under the auspices of the Resident Coordinator who has pledged in order to have on board the Ministry of Economy and International Cooperation and all the development partners such as ADB and WB.

Innovations in Programme and Operations to address the key development: In the programme the issue of collaboration with the local authorities in order to issue a better delivery and reach the population most in need. In the case of energy for all, the RC advocated for getting more national entrepreneurs involved into the renewable energy as solution to the lack of energy in the city and some of the localities.

Managing the issues related to the environment and provided training to the civil servants of the ministry of environment for better understanding the mainstreaming of the issues related to the climate change into the national development plans. The United Nations has supported the country to create environment knowledge sharing network. The United Nations in collaborating with MECF and National Council for the Prevention and Disaster Management (CONPREC) has been working on developing child-inclusive program on Education in Emergency plan to be incorporated in to the National Disaster Management Plan, managed by CONPREC.

The monitoring and evaluation multi-sectors Malaria, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis plans for 2012-2016 were prepared jointly by WHO, UNICEF and the Global Fund Unit/UNDP. The capacity building programs for health personnel and programs for the development of a roadmap for MMR vaccination are being elaborated with support from UNICEF and WHO. UNFPA and UNICEF jointly supported a program to improve delivery capacity in maternity wards at the center and district level, with the aim of reducing maternal and neonatal mortality.

UNDP and WHO have organized a workshop on health and environment. This is to show the nexus between the health and the environment.

2014 marked the third year of implementation of the second United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2012-2016) which is fully aligned to the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (2012-2016) and outlines the expected results in four thematic areas that are all drawn from the key priorities of National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The following are highlights of progress towards achievements of UNDAF results:

UNDAF outcome 1: promoting good governance, consolidating the rule of law and institutional strengthening. The United Nations System in São Tome and Principe has provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Justice for the formulation of a study on the restructuration of the Criminal and investigation police. The United Nations also provide technical and financial assistance to the 4th population and housing census. The United Nations provided regular functioning of the CRC Committee (partnership between Protection and Social Policies Programs) for the monitoring of CRC and

CEDAW implementation. Furthermore, evidence exists for increased and more effective use of child protection principles in policy and program development and advocacy.

UNDAF outcome 2: reducing vulnerability and improving living conditions of the population in improving their access to basic social services. The United Nations developed with the ministry of health a new health strategy. In order to better monitor and evaluate the malaria, the HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis, the United Nations has provided technical and financial assistance to the formulation of monitoring and evaluation plans for each of the three diseases. The United Nations developed with the ministry of education the education policy and its decennial action plan.

UNDAF outcome 3: promoting new growth opportunities, development of income generating activities, job creation and food security. In order to better mainstream the poverty within the whole country, the United Nations Has provided technical and financial support to the implementation of the 2010 household survey and the formulation of the national poverty reduction strategy (2012-2016) and its action plan (2013-2015). The United Nations has also provided technical support to the direction of Labor in formulating a decent work and the national employment policy.

UNDAF outcome 4: environmental sustainability and disaster management. The United Nations provided technical and financial to the government in building some ecological houses in order to protect the environment. The United Nations put in place the legal and institutional framework for better

Upcoming Opportunities for 2015

The UNDAF outcomes will be addressed in 2015. Focus would be aimed at continuing the dialogue, the advocacy in furthering the Human Rights and advising on the drivers of the national priorities mentioned in the UNDAF (2012-2016).

The 2015 work plan aims to ensure that the UNCT takes the actions planned to achieve UNDAF outcomes, based on its mid recourse review recommendations. At the same time, the work plan recognizes the constraints placed on the UNCT, has to addresses the new challenges aims to take advantage of emerging opportunities and build on previous program achievements, strengthen partnerships, and make use of recent evaluations and lessons learned. Specifically, the experiences gained and activities to be pursued are as follows:

- The UNCT will continue to provide substantive and technical and financial support to the implementation of the judiciary reform program with the aim of justice for all, particularly the most vulnerable population. There is a room for more south-south cooperation building on the success of the Timor Lasted Sao Tome agreement in that area. Therefore, UNCT should play an important role in order to get a greater involvement of the Government.
- The UNCT has undertaken the mi-term review of the UNDAF/UNDAF Action Plan as scheduled in monitoring and evaluation plan of UNDAF in April 2014. Therefore, the UNCT should prepare the road map for the next programming cycle which should commence this year with the Country Analysis or the Common Country Assessment. This is would be realized before the end of the first quarter of 2015. As well a Mission of CADRI will take place during the year to conduct and Capacity Assessment of the Country capacities and develop a national Disaster Risk Reduction Plan. The plan will also educate the next UNDAF programming cycle.

- Promotion of gender equity, consolidation of gains so far in AIDS, TB and malarial control, as well as programs to improve maternal and child health, food security and nutrition will be continued.
- A human rights-based approach and gender approach should continue to be advocated for and integrated across all activities;
- São Tomé and Príncipe is confronted with considerable capacity challenges at different levels, especially in planning, monitoring and evaluation. The UNCT will continue to provide support to help the government in conducting long-term and medium term planning, strengthening leadership skills, international negotiation skills and management capacities for a large number of officials in both the central and local Governments as well as in CSOs.
- Strong ownership of the development management process, Resource mobilization and coordination will be fostered as they are critical for the country to address the twin challenges of inclusive growth and sustainable development for a better structural transformation.
- Based on the gains in the areas of aid coordination, disaster management, gender equity and early girl pregnancy. The UNCT will continue to support South-South development cooperation and regional integration of the country.
- The UNCT will continue to support the institutionalization of disaster management mechanisms.
- Data for development, the UNCT will assist the INE to process, compile and analyze the data of the 3rd Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey.
- The problem of energy is a reality within the country. Therefore the RC will continue to pledge for the use of the funds of Energy for all to improve the condition of living of many citizens of the country. In that case RC has advocated to get the as many as possible the national entrepreneurs to be involved into the renewable energy through a guarantee funds.
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Recommendations

1. It is important to note that the 2014 results were achieved, under the guidance and directives of the Resident Coordinator, with no extra staff support to the UN in São Tomé and Príncipe during this intensive implementation phase. Experience shows that the upfront investment in term of staff time has been overwhelming. While enhanced coordination and avoidance will undoubtedly lead to efficiency gains in the future, start-up investment costs from all UN resident and non-resident agencies will be encouraged.

2. Need for clear policy guidance and criteria in implementing the SPO for the country to become a DaO “Self Starter Country” category: While there has been strong encouragement from DOCO for UNCTs to become “self-starters” within the context of the General Assembly resolutions on Delivering as One, without clarity of definition, criteria for designation and support mechanisms, there are apparent inconsistencies between DOCO and agency-specific “messages” to UNCTs on becoming a self-starter country. Hence, clear guidelines on this category of countries are needed for those already on the “list” as well as those interested in being declared as such.

3. Simplification and harmonization of systems: The pace of reform at the country level is linked to the willingness of Agency headquarters to support this reform. Many agencies reported that the necessary flexibility has not been forthcoming in terms of allowing for harmonization and simplification of procedures, guidelines and practices. Continued support by different Agency headquarters and regional director teams with regard to UN Reform and Delivering as One will play a key role in enhancing progress towards UN reform at the country level.

