

India - Sao Tome & Principe Relations

India and Sao Tome and Principe (STP) have generally enjoyed warm and friendly relations, particularly after 1975 (post-STP independence era). High level interactions have been limited to occasional multilateral meetings. STP is keen to develop closer ties with India, considers India as a potential strategic partner and is willing to enter an institutional arrangement in that regard.

Political

Leaders of the both countries have been meeting on the side lines of some of the international fora such as the UN, NAM, etc. Dr. Carlos Alberto Pires Tiny, then 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 STP Foreign Minister held extensive discussions with Dr. Shashi Tharoor, then MoS for State for External Affairs, which covered the entire range of bilateral relations. Both sides signed a Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations, enabling senior officials of the respective Foreign Ministries to have regular interaction on bilateral, regional and international issues. India assured STP of its support in the form of Official Development Assistance, technical cooperation and capacity building to facilitate the rapid economic & social development of its people. In this context, the Government of India announced a grant of US\$1 million for setting up a Technology Incubation-cum-Production Centre for development of SME sector and another grant of Rs. 10 million for meeting immediate requirements in education and health sectors. It was also agreed to favourably consider a Line of Credit for US\$5 million for priority projects to be identified by STP side in the fields of agriculture, capacity building and infrastructure. STP announced its support for India to become a Permanent Member of an expanded UN Security Council. It voted for India for the Non-Permanent seat for the term 2011-2012.

STP was transferred as concurrent accreditation to Embassy of India, Luanda (Angola) from High Commission of India, Lagos (Nigeria) in September 2008. Ambassador A R Ghanshyam visited Sao Tome and Principe from November 9-14, 2008 to present his credentials to then President Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes. During the visit, he met the Prime Minister and Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Fisheries, Commerce & Industries to discuss possible projects and programmes under bilateral cooperation. STP dignitaries showed keen interest in enhancing political, economic and commercial relations with India. Ambassador Debraj Pradhan visited STP from March 25-30, 2012 in connection with presentation of credentials. On March 27, he presented credentials to President Manuel Pinto da Costa. During his stay, he called on PM Patrice Trovoada and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Finance and International Cooperation. During his meeting with the STP dignitaries, Ambassador Pradhan discussed ways and means to further expand and improve the cooperation between the two countries. Later, he visited the sites of the Pan-African E-connectivity Project in Sao Tome. Separately, Ambassador Pradhan called on Ministers of Public Works as well as Education in March 2012, when they were on official visits to Angola. Ambassador Debraj Pradhan called on the STP Prime Minister Gabriel Da Costa in June 2013 during the latter's visit to Luanda. Ambassador Pradhan also visited Sao Tome from July 9-11, 2013 to attend an International Donors' Conference, which was jointly organized by Sao Tome &

Principe, Government and UN agencies led by UNDP. Ambassador Pradhan met the Sao Tome Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and the Minister of Planning and Finance on the sidelines of the Conference and discussed bilateral matters.

Sao Tome & Principe participated in the Third India Africa Summit held in New Delhi from 26 Oct 2015. The delegation was led by the Prime Minister Mr. Patrice Trovoada and included the Foreign Minister. The Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of India.

Trade

STP imports products world-wide worth US\$145 million annually. The trade between India and STP is almost negligible. Though STP importers are interested in procuring various items of interest from India, one of the constant complaints they have is that the shipping time and costs are quite high. Main items of imports have been pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, cotton and optical, photographic, medical instruments etc. Bilateral trade figures for the last 5 years are given below:

	(US\$ million)				
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Indian Exports	11.42	17.15	21.31	17.24	15.01
Indian Imports	0.11	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.05
Total trade	0.88	1.47	1.05	1.27	1.17

Oil

OVL has a 13.5% stake in Bloc 2 of the Joint Development Zone through its wholly-owned subsidiary in Nigeria-ONGC Narmada Ltd. Another company Aban Engineering will be drilling Bloc 4 of the JDZ.

Line of Credit

Lines of Credit (US\$5 million+US\$1 million) extended to STP in 2009 remained unutilized as the STP authorities had not been in a position to prepare groundwork for specific infrastructure projects, as required under the terms and conditions of the Lines of Credit. STP authorities have expressed interest in reviving the LOC.

Pan African E-connectivity Project

STP authorities have been effectively implementing the Pan-Africa EConnectivity Project, offered under the IAFS-I decision. TCIL has stationed an engineer in Sao Tome to oversee the implementation of the project. STP was the 47th African country to sign the agreement.

Technical cooperation

STP has been allocated 5 slots under ITEC programme, annually. So far, only one STP diplomat had undergone training in PCFD course at FSI, New Delhi.

Agreements

A Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations between India and STP was signed during the visit of then STP Foreign Minister's visit to India in November 2009.

Indian Community

There was a small Indian community in STP until 1961 which moved away to other countries during the liberation of Goa. There are only a few Indians in STP working in the food sector, but Indian traders settled in neighboring countries visit São Tomé & Príncipe for trading.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Luanda website:

<http://www.indembangola.org/>

Embassy of India, Luanda Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Embassy-of-India-Luanda/209463462473631>

January 2016