

India – Sao Tome & Principe Relations

India and São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) have enjoyed warm and friendly relations since its independence in 1975. Leaders of the both countries have been meeting on the side lines of some of the international fora, such as UN, NAM, etc. Dr. Carlos Alberto Pires Tiny, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation & Communities visited India from 29th November to 2nd December, 2009. This was the first highlevel 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, then Minister of State for External Affairs, which covered the entire gamut of bilateral relations. India assured Sao Tome and Principe of its support in the form of official developmental 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 the STP side in the fields of agriculture, capacity building and infrastructure. Both these are being implemented.

In October 2010 Computer hardware were gifted to the Government of ST&P. During the same time, 173 packets of essential medicine was delivered to the Health Ministry of ST&P as a goodwill gesture.

Sao Tome and Principe announced its support for India to become a Permanent Member of an expanded UN Security Council. It also assured India of its support for a Non-Permanent seat for the term 2011-2012. Both the Ministers 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. Sao Tome and Principe became the 47th country to join the Government of India's Pan-African e-Network Project, when the Minister signed the MOU with TCIL.

Bilateral agreements

A MOU for cooperation between STP Chamber of Commerce and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is under consideration. Draft proposals were given to the STP side by the CII to the STP side during the visit of Foreign Minister Dr Carlos Tiny to India in November 2009. A Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations between India and STP was signed during the visit of STP Foreign Minister to India during 29 Nov to 02 Dec 2009.

Bilateral Trade: STP imports products worth approximately US\$ 50 mn annually. The bilateral 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. The main items of imports have been pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, cotton and optical, photographic, medical instruments etc Latest data on India-Sao Tome & Principe trade during the last five years as available on the website of the Department of Commerce, New Delhi, are given below:

(in US\$ million)

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Export	0.88	1.47	0.98	1.22	1.06
Import	N.A.	0.00	0.06	0.05	0.11
Total Trade	0.88	1.47	1.05	1.27	1.17

Oil:

OVL (ONGC-Videsh Limited) has a 13.5% stake in bloc 2 of the Joint Development Zone (JDZ) through its wholly owned subsidiary in Nigeria-ONGC Narmada Ltd. Another company Aban Engineering will be drilling bloc 4 of the JDZ. OVL is planning to begin its exploration drilling soon.

Indian Community:

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

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