

8. During the visit, the delegation met with H.E. Carlos Manuel Vila Nova, President of São Tomé and Príncipe and senior members of his government, including Mr. Patrice Trovoada, Prime Minister; Ms. Ilza Maria dos Santos Amado Vaz, Minister of Justice, Public Administration and Human Rights; Mr. Gareth Haddad do Espírito Santo Guadalupe, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities; and Mr. Jorge Amado, Minister of Defense and Internal Administration. The delegation also met with other relevant stakeholders, such as the Attorney General, the President of the Constitutional Court, the President of the Court of Audit, the President of the Military Court, the Deputy President of the Supreme Court, National Police officials, Judicial Police officials, and a prison director. Additionally, we met with the President of the National Assembly and members of Parliament, as well as representatives of civil society, the International Monetary Fund, the diplomatic community and the UN Country Team.

9. In our discussions on the justice and security sectors in São Tomé and Príncipe, we were largely guided by the recommendations of the UN-ECCAS assessment of April 2023, which had been endorsed by the Government. The comprehensive assessment laid out a number of challenges but also recommendations towards strengthening the rule of law and the justice system, including: guaranteeing equal and fair access to justice; investing in security sector reform to ensure can address internal and external threats; ensuring the effectiveness of oversight bodies in the justice and security sectors; and safeguarding an inclusive national vision on rule of law through the active involvement of various stakeholders, particularly civil society, including women and youth.

10. The impetus for such reforms began in September 2019, when the government hosted national consultations

challenges, the justice system is an issue they complain most about. She informed that the National Assembly was in the process of reviewing 11 reform bills in that regard. The Independent Democratic Action (ADI) and the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe-Social Democratic Party (MLSTP-PSD) parliamentary leaders with whom the delegation exchanged views welcomed therefore the Secretary-General support through the Peacebuilding Fund and reaffirmed the importance of investing in justice and security sector reform as a form of prevention and to safeguard

these most needed reforms for Santomeans. Partners welcomed the political engagement of the PBC and, while recognizing the efforts already undertaken to modernize the justice sector, observed that previous efforts had been largely technical in nature and failed to address basic structural challenges. They welcomed the roundtable as a first of many conversations to maximize coherence and coordination of all relevant partners supporting the country in the fields of justice and security sector reforms. Most partners underscored the importance for Santomeans of anchoring these reforms in mechanisms and institutions that can guarantee the long-term consolidation of gains and guard against reversals in the context of future transfers of political power.

20. During the roundtable, the Minister of Defense emphasized that there could be no justice without security and recalled that there was presently no national security strategy for São Tomé and Príncipe. He informed of practical needs such as greater capacity-building for security personnel as well as equipment such as closed-circuit television (CCTV), which could enhance security in urban and rural areas without having to deploy a large number of officers at all times. He further expounded on equipment and capacity needs to better inspect imported goods and fight against piracy and illegal fishing.

21. We concluded our mission to São Tomé and Príncipe with the joint signing of the Peacebuildi

Peacebuilding Support. At the signing, the ASG explained that the project, supported by UNDP and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as implementing partners, would assist nationally owned and led reform efforts to strengthen the justice sector and build on the existing political consensus for justice reform

While the PBF project mainly focuses on the justice sector, it would also support a nationally-led and inclusive review of the security sector to assist in the elaboration of an SSR strategy and further identify areas for strengthening and support, including related to maritime security. The Prime Minister welcomed the project, underscoring that it would help guarantee that São Tomé and Príncipe stays the course in maintaining peace, stability, and democracy. The Prime Minister also expressed willingness to continue working with the Peacebuilding Commission

priorities. We appreciate the hospitality extended by the government of São Tomé and Príncipe during our visit, as well as the informative and constructive discussions with other national stakeholders and partners. We wish to thank the Resident Coordinator and UN colleagues for their support during the visit.

Reflections

1. I was encouraged to see that a broad consensus remains in São Tomé and Príncipe on the need to reform the justice sector.
2. I legislative package.
3. I encourage the swift consideration of the 11 bills put forward by members of the National Assembly in order to expeditiously embed them in the legal framework and ensure their continuity beyond political cycles. As indicated to the delegation by various Santomean interlocutors, this will help to rebuild trust between citizens and the State.

