



## PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

### **Ambassadorial-level meeting on São Tomé and Príncipe**

29 May 2025, 10:00 AM – 01:00 PM, ECOSOC Chamber

#### **Draft Concept Note**

##### Context and background

The Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe has identified reform and professionalization of its justice and security sectors as critical peacebuilding priorities.

At the request of President Carlos Vila Nova in April 2023, the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) conducted a joint assessment mission of the justice and security sectors in São Tomé and Príncipe, following violent events in November 2022, which the Santomean Government characterized as an attempted coup d'état. The report of this joint mission, published in November 2023, was endorsed by the Santomean Government and made a multitude of recommendations to bolster the justice and security sectors, with a view to mending social fragility.<sup>1</sup> The Government recognized that it would require political accompaniment and support with resource-mobilization to put the recommendations into effect.

Against this backdrop, in January 2024, the Peacebuilding Commission convened a first Ambassadorial-level meeting on São Tomé and Príncipe with the then-Prime Minister in attendance, among other briefers. The then-Prime Minister underlined the Government's efforts to ensure good governance, while highlighting that limited resources significantly hamper the effective functioning of the judicial system, which risks eroding public trust.<sup>2</sup> He appealed to the Peacebuilding Commission for assistance in mobilizing the requisite resources to support reform efforts.

Following this engagement, the Peacebuilding Commission developed a Resource Mobilization Plan to build common understanding of needs, bring coherence to contributions, and reach out to potential contributors.<sup>3</sup> It is axed around five “pillars”: optimizing the performance of the Ministry of Justice; guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary; guaranteeing access to fair justice;

---

<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1: “[Report of the joint strategic assessment mission to the justice and security sectors of Sao Tome and Principe](#),” Economic Community of Central African States and United Nations, November 2023.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 2: “[Ambassadorial-level meeting on peace consolidation in São Tomé and Príncipe: Chair's Summary](#),” Peacebuilding Commission, January 2024.

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 4: “[PBC mobilization plan in support to Sao Tome's Justice and Security Sectors \(based on UN-ECCAS assessment report\)](#),” Peacebuilding Commission, September 2024 [Note: this is the latest version currently available].

ensuring that the administration of justice is conducted in full respect of human rights; and professionalizing the armed forces. The plan was informed by a visit undertaken by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission to São Tomé and Príncipe in May 2023, from which the Chair drew a series of observations. A mission report had been circulated to the Commission’s members.<sup>4</sup>

Concurrently, a project from the Peacebuilding Fund was developed to help build momentum behind reforms to the justice and security sectors of São Tomé and Príncipe. This two-year project, formally initiated in September 2024, has an approved budget of \$2,523,916 and is implemented by UNDP, UNODC, and OHCHR, in cooperation with Santomean authorities and civil society.<sup>5</sup> This allocation from the Peacebuilding Fund, coming off the heels of engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission, is an example of productive synergies between the PBC and PBF.

Further to the adoption of the Pact for the Future in September 2024, in which Member States are encouraged to consider developing national prevention strategies, Santomean authorities committed to producing such a strategy. The Government established an interdepartmental working committee, including representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defense, and the Prime Minister’s Office, to oversee the drafting. It is expected that the strategy will be finalized before this meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission, and that H.E. Mr Carlos Vila Nova, President of São Tomé and Príncipe, will present it to the Commission.

### Objectives

This Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission will be an opportunity for São Tomé and Príncipe to present the progress that has been achieved – since the first PBC meeting in January 2024 – in furtherance of its peacebuilding priorities, to highlight existing gaps and challenges, and to present strategic areas in need of further support. It will equally be an opportunity for the Peacebuilding Commission to showcase the impact of its engagement on São Tomé and Príncipe, take stock of successes and challenges, and chart ways forward to optimize the Commission’s support. In particular, this meeting will serve for the Government to present its newly developed national prevention strategy, and for the Commission to consider what support it may be able to provide.

### Outcomes

Members of the PBC may welcome and/or take note of São Tomé and Príncipe’s newly developed national conflict prevention strategy, and consider how the Commission may collectively offer support and/or how individual Member States may offer support. The PBC may also take note of

---

<sup>4</sup> See Annex 5: “[Visit of the PBC Delegation to Sao Tomé and Príncipe, 13-15 May 2024: Chair’s Report](#),” Peacebuilding Commission, May 2024.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex 3: “[PBF Project Document: Strengthening the Justice and Security sectors in Sao Tome and Principe](#),” Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund, July 2024.

progresses and gaps in the implementation of São Tomé and Príncipe's peacebuilding priorities, namely as relate to reforming and professionalizing the justice and security sectors, in line with the recommendations of the 2023 UN-ECCAS mission report. Members States may moreover brief on contributions that may have been made through multilateral, bilateral, or other means, to help implement São Tomé and Príncipe's peacebuilding priorities. Furthermore, possible outcomes of the meeting may include a joint statement from H.E. Mr. Carlos Vila Nova, the President, and the PBC Chair. A Chair's Summary will also be prepared and circulated.

#### Provisional agenda

- Opening remarks by H.E. Ms. Antje Leendertse, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, Chair of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.
- Briefings by:
  - H.E. Mr Carlos Vila Nova, President of São Tomé and Príncipe;
  - H.E. Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Verissimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States;
  - Mr. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa; and
  - Ms. Kissa da Costa, President of the Women Lawyer's Organization.
- Interventions from the floor.
- Remarks by Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support.
- Closing remarks by H.E. Ms. Antje Leendertse, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, Chair of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.