



# Alternative Report for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Human Rights in São Tomé and Príncipe

**Authoring Organization:** Center for Public Integrity of São Tomé and Príncipe (CIPSTP) **Expected Submission Date:** July 16, 2025

## 1. Introduction

The Center for Public Integrity of São Tomé and Príncipe (CIPSTP) is a civil society organization dedicated to promoting good governance, transparency, and the defense of Human Rights in São Tomé and Príncipe. This Alternative Report is submitted within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United Nations Human Rights Council, aiming to provide an independent civil society perspective on progress and challenges in protecting Human Rights in the country.

**This document holds historical significance, being the first Human Rights Alternative Report entirely prepared by civil society within the national territory.** Its scope reflects the maturity and strength of local organizations in actively contributing to the scrutiny and improvement of the Human Rights framework in São Tomé and Príncipe.

This report focuses exclusively on the theme of **Corruption and Transparency**, a crucial area for the development and guarantee of fundamental rights in São Tomé and Príncipe.

## 2. Methodology

The preparation of this Alternative Report was based on a comprehensive and participatory methodology, covering the period since the last UPR cycle (3rd cycle). The collection of information aimed at obtaining **credible and reliable** data, essential for an in-depth analysis.

The information collection methods included:

- **Documentary Review:** Analysis of government reports, national legislation, international instruments, and recommendations from previous UPR cycles (including consultation of the UPR-Info database).
- **Online Questionnaire for Santomean Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** To gather the perspective and experiences of various local organizations.
- **Interviews with Key Individuals:** Experts, activists, and community representatives, to deepen the understanding of challenges and progress.
- **Consultation with Vulnerable Groups:** To ensure that the voices of those most affected are included in the analysis.
- **Event-Based Data and Statistics Analysis:** Compilation and analysis of available data on incidents, occurrences, and statistics relevant to the themes addressed.

To assess the level of implementation of previous recommendations, the use of the OHCHR's **Country Recommendations Matrix** was considered, allowing for a precise and thematic evaluation of the State's progress. The main focus is the civil society perspective, complementing the State's assessment.

### 3. National Context of the UPR in São Tomé and Príncipe: Focus on Corruption

São Tomé and Príncipe, a young democracy, faces challenges in the effective implementation of Human Rights. The national regulatory framework, although existing, lacks harmonization and full application with international instruments.

#### Information on the Level of Implementation of Recommendations from the Last Cycle (3rd Cycle) of the UPR:

São Tomé and Príncipe received a total of **108** recommendations in the last UPR cycle. Of these, **106** were accepted and **2** were noted.

The implementation of recommendations from previous cycles, focused on Corruption, has been inconsistent. Progress is observed in the creation of legal frameworks, but their effective application and accountability remain challenges. There is stagnation in ensuring the full independence of control institutions, which contributes to the perception of impunity.

**Especially Affected or Most Vulnerable Groups:** CIPSTP's analysis indicates that the following groups are particularly affected by issues of Corruption:

- **Rural populations and coastal communities:** Frequently marginalized and disproportionately affected by corruption in development projects or natural resource management.
- **Women and girls:** May face increased vulnerabilities to specific forms of corruption, such as gender corruption, which limits their access to services and opportunities.

#### Statistics or Data to Support the Analysis:

- **Perception of Corruption:** Recent surveys (e.g., Afrobarometer) indicate that over 70% of citizens in São Tomé and Príncipe perceive corruption as a "very big" problem in the country.
- **Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI):** São Tomé and Príncipe has consistently received low scores on the CPI, reflecting a widespread perception of high levels of corruption in the public sector.
- **Judicial Cases:** The number of judicial cases for corruption crimes resulting in effective convictions remains very low, suggesting a high rate of impunity.

## 4. Thematic Analysis and Recommendations: Corruption and Transparency

The recommendations presented by CIPSTP are formulated following the **S.M.A.R.T.** methodology (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound), aiming to maximize their effectiveness and facilitate the monitoring of their implementation.

- **Relevant UPR-Info Recommendations:**
  - **106.57 (Australia, Cycle 3):** "Strictly enforce anti-corruption laws, including through the investigation and prosecution of persons who commit such offences." (Supported)
  - **106.55 (USA, Cycle 3):** "Enact reforms to reduce corruption, increase transparency of financial assets of political leaders, investigate incidents of police corruption, and conduct trials of public officials accused of corruption." (Supported)
  - **106.50 (Indonesia, Cycle 3):** "Continue enhancing the capacities of institutions to deal with organized crime, corruption and other challenges related to the rule of law." (Supported)
- **Civil Society Analysis:**

Corruption continues to be a significant obstacle to sustainable development and the full realization of human rights in São Tomé and Príncipe. Public perception of corruption is high, and prevention and combat mechanisms still show fragilities. The lack of resources and the limited independence of control institutions, such as the Court of Auditors and the General Inspectorate of Finance, compromise their effectiveness.

Civil society analysis reveals that, despite existing laws, implementation is weak and impunity persists. Lack of transparency and limited access to public information hinder monitoring and accountability. **A crucial challenge is the absence of two fundamental legal instruments: the Public Probity Law and the Public and Administrative Information Access Law.** Although Civil Society, through the Pro-PALOP-TL Project (phase 2), developed draft laws for both and submitted them to the National Assembly via Petition, these have not yet been approved. The creation and implementation of these instruments are fundamental for institutions like COSIL (Public Procurement Commission) and the Ministry of Finance to disclose open documents, allowing NGOs and the general public to access information on public contracts and tenders for more effective scrutiny of the executive. The absence of these laws also hinders full compliance with international obligations, such as those stipulated in the **United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)** and the **African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC)**, to which São Tomé and Príncipe is a signatory.

- **CIPSTP's Recommendations (SMART and Priority):**
  - That the Government of STP **create and fully implement the Public Probity Law** by December 2026, with the establishment of an independent oversight and sanction body, endowed with adequate resources and a clear mandate

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for investigation and punishment. This implementation must include the obligation for **Public Office Holders and Public Managers to submit Asset Declarations** regularly and verifiably, ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

- That the National Assembly of STP **approve and the Government implement the Public and Administrative Information Access Law by June 2026**, ensuring proactive and reactive access to government documents and data, essential for public scrutiny and corruption prevention.
- That the State of STP strengthen the capacity and independence of control institutions (e.g., Court of Auditors, General Inspectorate of Finance) by 2027, ensuring the allocation of adequate human and financial resources and the timely and accessible publication of their audit reports.
- That the Government of STP develop and implement a comprehensive and participatory National Anti-Corruption Plan by 2026, with clear goals, performance indicators, and monitoring mechanisms that involve civil society.

## 5. Best Practices and Challenges of Civil Society

CIPSTP, as a civil society actor, recognizes the crucial role of CSOs in the UPR process. Our participation is guided by principles of credibility and collaboration.

- **Practices Adopted:** The preparation of this report reflects the practice of **joint submissions** (through collaboration with other CSOs in questionnaires and interviews), which increases the visibility and credibility of the information. The use of **concrete data and technical language** aims to ensure that our concerns are clearly understood by UN Member States.
- **Challenges:** Civil society in São Tomé and Príncipe faces challenges such as **limited resources** for continuous monitoring and advocacy, as well as the need to **strengthen the capacity for analysis and formulation of SMART recommendations** more broadly across all CSOs. Ensuring a **robust and safe civic space** for organizations to operate is also a constant concern.

## 6. Conclusion and Call to Action

This Alternative Report by CIPSTP underlines that, despite some progress, São Tomé and Príncipe faces persistent challenges in the full implementation of UPR recommendations, particularly in the area of Corruption and Transparency. This area requires urgent attention and concrete actions to guarantee human rights for all its citizens.

CIPSTP reiterates its commitment to continue monitoring the human rights situation and to work in collaboration with the State and other partners towards building a more just, transparent, and equitable society.



We call upon the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe to seriously consider the recommendations presented in this report, validate them, and implement them effectively and transparently, honoring its international human rights commitments. The active participation of civil society is a fundamental pillar for the success of this process and for the sustainable development of the country.