

Universal Periodic Review

(51st Session)

Contribution of UNESCO to Compilation of UN information

Sao Tome and Principe

I. RATIFICATION OF UNESCO CONVENTIONS

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession, acceptance, approval or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	Ratification on 25 July 2006			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	Ratification on 25 July 2006			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)	Ratification on 3 October 2024			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960	Not ratified	Reservation to this Convention shall not be permitted		Right to education

II. REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Discrimination in education (UNESCO consultations)

1. Sao Tome and Principe did not submit a report to the 10th and 11th consultations on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.

Constitution and main education law(s)

2. The [Constitution of Sao Tome and Principe of 1975, as amended in 2003](#), enshrines the right to education but it is limited to citizens (article 55. 1) and a principle of non-discrimination (article 15. 1). The Constitution guarantees free and compulsory basic education.
3. The [Framework Law on Education of 2018](#) enshrines the right to education but it is limited to citizens (article 2. 1) and a principle of equal opportunities in education (article 2. 2). The same law guarantees nine years of free and compulsory primary education and lower secondary education (article 12.1). Pre-primary education is free and compulsory for one year (article 5. 2).

Corporal punishment

4. In Sao Tome and Principe, no legal provision has been identified that guarantees protection from corporal punishment.

Enrolment rates

5. Most recent UIS available data for the enrollment rates is as follows:

	Pre-primary education (net) (2021)	Primary education (gross) (2021)	Secondary education (gross) (2021)	Tertiary education (gross) (2021)
Girls	65.20%	104.10%	91.98%	18.22%
Boys	60.29%	113.61%	83.51%	14.70%
Total	62.73%	108.87%	87.78%	16.49%

Investment in education

6. According to UIS data, in Sao Tome and Principe, in 2023, the government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 5.03%, and 18.35% of the total government expenditure. The most recent UIS data indicates that, in 2024, the government expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure was 18.09%.

Gender equality

7. During the last cycle, recommendations were made to ensure gender equality in education and guarantee equal access to education for girls (106.17, 106.95, 106.96 and 106.100). In that regard, Sao Tome and Principe adopted the [Strengthening the education system to generate quality and equity in learning Partnership Compact in 2023](#), which includes multiple measures to address the “obstacles to the education and well-being of girls, [...] namely union and early pregnancy, prejudices regarding gender, the weight of social norms and cultural traditions that perpetuate women's subalternity”.

B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Constitutional and Legislative framework

8. The 1975 Constitution of Sao Tome and Principe revised in 2023, safeguards freedom of expression and information through Article 29 as well as freedom of the press through Article 30.
9. São Tomé and Príncipe adopted several laws related to freedom of opinion and expression, including the Press Law, Law no. 2/93, published in Diário da República no. 5, on 8 April 2010, the Law on the Organisation and Functioning of the Higher Press Council, Law 4/96 - Diário da República no. 6/96, the Rules of Procedure of the Higher Press Council - Resolution no. 6/97, the Journalists' Statute - Decree-Law no. 3/2021, Diário da República no. 5, the Journalists' Code of Ethics - Decree no. 25/2019 and other rules relating to the Journalists' Association and the Portfolio Commission
10. Defamation, libel, and slander are considered criminal offences under the 2012 Penal Code of Sao Tome and Principe¹, which can lead up to a maximum of two years of imprisonment.
11. There is no legislation concerning freedom of information in Sao Tome and Principe.

Implementation of legislation

12. The Superior Press Council of the Conselho Superior de Imprensa da República Democrática de São Tome e Principe (CSI) regulates the media sector. It is composed of seven members who which are selected/appointed by quotas given to different legislative, judiciary and executive bodies of the Government as well as members of the media and culture communities and civil associations (Article 5/Law 4/96). It is chaired by a magistrate, appointed by the Superior Council of the Judiciary. The seven members of the Superior Press Council are sworn in by the President of the National Assembly.²

Safety of Journalists

13. Since 2006, when systematic monitoring began, UNESCO recorded no killing of journalists in São Tome e Principe, on its Observatory of Killed Journalists.³

C. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS

¹ <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC209843/> ;
http://www.rjcplp.org/sections/informacao/anexos/legislacao-sao-tome-e-2539/codigos-e-estatutos-sao2859/codigo-penal-sao-tome-e/downloadFile/file/Codigo_Penal.pdf?nocache=1365762644.85

² See <http://www.csi.st/leis.pdf>

³ Accessed on 15 May 2025.

14. The Constitution of Sao Tome and Principe affirms freedom of scientific creation and expression (Article 28). It does not mention the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits or any other science-related rights.
15. Sao Tome and Principe has ratified the ICESCR which means the Covenant's provisions take precedence over all internal legislative and normative acts below the constitutional level according to Article 13 of the Constitution. It has not ratified its Optional Protocol.
16. Sao Tome and Principe did not include in its Third Cycle National Report (2020) an explicit reference to the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, or inherent rights such as scientific freedom and made no reference to science-related rights. No science-related Recommendations were made, nor were any Recommendations made in respect of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits or its inherent rights such as scientific freedom. Sao Tome and Principe did not submit its national report on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers for the consultation period from 2017 to 2021, nor has it yet done so for the second consultation from 2021 to 2025.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

17. Sao Tome and Principe should be encouraged to:
 - i. Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education.
 - ii. Consider explicitly enshrine the right to education for all within the constitution and the legislation.
 - iii. Guarantee in the legislation at least twelve years of free primary and secondary education.
 - iv. Legally proscribe corporal punishment in education settings
 - v. Continue efforts to ensure the right to inclusive education for girls.
 - vi. Continue to ensure regular reporting to UIS on education data.
 - vii. Regularly submit comprehensive national reports for the periodic consultations on UNESCO's education-related standard-setting instruments, and notably on the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.
 - viii. Share with UNESCO any relevant information to update its country profile on UNESCO's [Observatory on the Right to Education](#) and [HerAtlas](#).

B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION

18. The Government is recommended to decriminalize defamation and place it within civil defamation legislation that is in accordance with international standards.
19. The Government is recommended to introduce an access to information law that is in accordance with international standards.

C. RIGHT TO FREELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY (CULTURAL RIGHTS)

20. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), São Tomé and Príncipe is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, São Tomé and Príncipe is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, migrants, refugees, young people, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

D. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS

21. Sao Tome and Principe is invited to continue its efforts to ensure the full and comprehensive implementation and monitoring of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in accordance with the relevant Decisions of UNESCO's Executive Board (216 EX/Decision 45 of May 2023). In that context, Sao Tome and Principe is invited to engage with UNESCO's Program on the promotion of scientific freedom and the safety of scientists and support the related Call to Action in line with the Recommendation and decisions of UNESCO's General Conference (42 C/Resolution 26 of November 2023) and Executive Board (219 EX/Decision 30 of March 2024). The Call to Action underlines the need to protect science and scientific researchers, and to allow for a free and safe science ecosystem where there is trust in science and where scientific evidence informs decision making. UNESCO stands ready to support Sao Tome and Principe in developing and nurturing its science ecosystem, and protecting its scientific researchers, including through the incorporation of appropriate legal and administrative measures in line with international law. Sao Tome and Principe is

invited to collaborate directly with UNESCO, through its Secretariat and specialised Sectors, for that purpose.

22. Against this background, Sao Tome and Principe is invited to consider the following:

- i. Submit a national report to the 2nd consultation on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in line with the Circular Letter by UNESCO's Director-General (CL/4448 of 28 November 2024) and the guidelines contained therein.
- ii. Explore ways to strengthen the status of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits in its legal system, including in its Constitution and any other appropriate legal and policy frameworks.
- iii. When implementing measures to guarantee the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to information, and the right to education, include within those measures the freedoms indispensable for scientific research, and access to scientific education at all levels.
- iv. Expand input on issues covered by UNESCO's Recommendation in its national report to the UPR – particularly providing information about the implementation of the right to science and scientific freedom, including the latter in its report addressing more broadly freedom of opinion and expression. This will allow further discussions thereon at the Human Rights Council and the formulation of specific recommendations.
- v. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR.