



Joint UN Workshop to support the graduation of São Tomé and Príncipe from the category of the LDCs

12-13 September 2019, Portuguese Cultural Center

São Tomé, São Tomé and Príncipe

Co-Organized by the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe, the United Nations in São Tomé and Príncipe and the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Graduation of Least Developed Countries¹,

in partnership with the Government of Portugal

Concept Note

Background

São Tomé and Príncipe will graduate from the category of LDCs in December 2024, as determined in resolution A/RES/73/133 by the General Assembly. The country first met the graduation criteria in March 2015 after exceeding the Human Assets Index (HAI) and the per capita income thresholds. The Committee for Development Policy (CDP) recommended the country's graduation at its 2018 Triennial Review, after the finding that São Tomé and Príncipe met the graduation criteria for a second consecutive time, with the HAI and GNI per capita exceeding the threshold for graduation to a higher degree than in the previous review. In line with the CDP recommendation following a request by the government of São Tomé and Príncipe for a longer transition period, the General Assembly decided to grant an extended transition period of six years rather than the standard three years so as to enable the government to enact necessary internal reforms and align its transition strategy with its national development plan.

Meeting the criteria for graduation constitutes an important milestone for São Tomé and Príncipe. It reflects the efforts made by the country and progress achieved in key areas for sustainable development.

¹ The United Nations Task Force on Graduation of Least Developed Countries (IATF) is a group of UN entities, which convene twice a year or more often as needed, with the goal to provide strengthened and coordinated UN system-wide support to the countries graduating from the LDC category. The IATF members organizing this workshop are: OHRRLLS, CDP Secretariat/DESA, UNRC Office, WTO, EIF and UNDP. Other members will also contribute.

Despite this important step forward, important challenges remain. The period of six years starting with the adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly, and concluding with the effective graduation from the category of LDCs in 2024, constitutes an opportunity for São Tomé and Príncipe and its development partners to build on progress so far so as to consolidate development gains and advance further and identifying critical areas where support is needed. Aligning these transitional efforts with national development goals and plans will make them more effective.

In the period leading up to 2024, São Tomé and Príncipe may prepare a smooth transition strategy in cooperation with its development partners. This strategy aims at ensuring that the phasing out of LDC-specific support measures resulting from its change of status will not disrupt the country's continued development efforts. In this regard, General Assembly resolution 59/209 recommends that the graduating country establishes a consultative mechanism, in cooperation with its development and trading partners, to facilitate the preparation of the transition strategy. Resolution 67/221 further recommends that other relevant consultative mechanisms operating in the country (for instance, under the auspices of the IMF and the World Bank) should incorporate the implications of graduation and smooth transition decisions in their activities in the country.

Both resolutions state that graduating countries can request the assistance of the United Nations system to prepare a transition strategy to adjust to the eventual phasing out of LDC-specific support measures. Furthermore, they seek the support of the United Nations Resident Coordinator and of the United Nations Country Team - a task force composed of the country's relevant development and trading partners – to facilitate the preparation of the transition strategy. Resolution 67/221 also invites graduating countries to report on the preparation of their transition strategy to the CDP on an annual basis.

The mission also responds to the request by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/224 and 69/231 calling for all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to extend the necessary support to least developed countries that aspire to graduate in the elaboration of their graduation and smooth transition strategy. In order to operationalize the mandate for coordinated action in favour of graduating countries, the Office of the High Representative has established an inter-agency task force (IATF) on graduation and smooth transition with the objective of providing strengthened and coordinated United Nations system-wide support to the countries graduating from the least developed country category.

The importance of developing a smooth transition strategy, led by the country and supported by the United Nations, other international organizations and development partners, was confirmed in resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016 adopted by the General Assembly in the context of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, where the General Assembly requested the United Nations development system to provide assistance to graduating countries in the formulation and implementation of their national transition strategies and to consider country-specific support for graduated countries for a fixed period of time and in a predictable manner. The importance of improved assistance to graduating and graduated LDCs was also stressed by the CDP at its twenty-first plenary meeting in March 2019. Specific recommendations for achieving such assistance are reflected in the CDP's report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).²

² [CDP Report on the twenty-first session \(11–15 March 2019\) to ECOSOC \(E/2019/33\)](#).

The workshop is the first joint UN mission in support of the graduation of São Tomé and Príncipe from the category of LDCs. Under the leadership of the Government, and in close coordination with the Resident Coordinator for São Tomé and Príncipe and the United Nations Country Team, the mission will serve to assess the needs of the country and opportunities for further support in the design and implementation of the smooth transition strategy by São Tomé and Príncipe.

Objectives

The objective of the mission is to support São Tomé and Príncipe in developing a comprehensive smooth transition strategy to successfully graduate out of the LDC category.

The mission will engage with Government Officials, development partners, civil society and private sector to facilitate a dialogue on supporting São Tomé and Príncipe in its path towards graduation and beyond.

To achieve this, the mission will consist of the following elements:

1. Knowledge sharing: Facilitate the dissemination of information regarding the graduation of the country from the LDC category among key national stakeholders and development partners; promote the exchange of information and lessons learned from countries that have graduated or are in the process of graduating from the category of LDCs.
2. Strategic policy support: Support to the formulation of a smooth transition strategy for São Tomé and Príncipe that assesses potential risks and expected impacts arising from graduation.
3. Advocacy: Support the establishment of a consultative mechanism with all relevant stakeholders to facilitate a smooth transition from the category of LDCs.
4. Partner coordination: Agreement between UN country team and UN HQ IATF on timeline of activities and outputs in support of São Tomé and Príncipe's graduation.

Participants

Participants will consist of representatives of the relevant ministries and government bodies, development partners, UN agencies, funds and programmes, civil society organizations and private sector organizations.

Annex I - Timeline of key events in the path towards graduation and beyond

12-16 March 2018	The Committee for Development Policy found Bhutan, São Tomé and Príncipe and the Solomon Islands eligible for graduation for a second consecutive time and recommended their graduation from the category of LDCs.
7 August 2018	<p>ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2018/27 endorsed the recommendation of the CDP that São Tomé and Príncipe graduates from the Category of LDCs.</p> <p>The resolution also found reasonable the request by São Tomé and Príncipe to postpone its effective graduation date to 2024 so as to enable it to enact necessary internal reforms and align its transition strategy with its national development plan.</p>
21 December 2018	General Assembly resolution A/RES/73/133 takes note of the endorsement by ECOSOC of the recommendations that São Tomé and Príncipe graduate from the Category of LDCs and takes note of the request to postpone its effective graduation date to 2024 in line with the recommendations from ECOSOC.
3-7 June 2019	Donor Coordination Meeting co-chaired by the United Nations Resident Coordinator for São Tomé and Príncipe and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
9-11 September 2019	Consultations with Government representatives and the UN CT.
12-13 September 2019	First joint UN Mission to support the graduation of São Tomé and Príncipe from the Category of LDCs.
December 2024	Effective graduation of São Tomé and Príncipe from the Category of LDCs.

Annex II - Reference documents

General Assembly 67/221, *Smooth transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries* (29 June 2011). available from undocs.org/A/RES/67/221.

General Assembly 65/2286, *Smooth transition for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries* (21 December 2012). available from undocs.org/A/RES/65/2286.

General Assembly resolution 68/224, *Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries* (20 December 2013), available from undocs.org/A/RES/68/224.

General Assembly resolution 69/231, *Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries* (20 December 2013), available from undocs.org/A/RES/69/231.

General Assembly resolution 71/243, *Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system* (21 December 2016), available from undocs.org/A/RES/71/243.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2018). *Vulnerability Profile of São Tomé and Príncipe*

United Nations (2018), Secretariat of the Committee of Development Policy, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Ex-ante Impact Assessment of Likely Consequences of Graduation of São Tomé and Príncipe*.

United Nations (2019). CDP Report on the twenty-first session (11–15 March 2019) to ECOSOC (E/2019/33)