UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

CONCEPT NOTE

1 - 2 December 2026

08:30 a.m. – 06:00 p.m. (UTC+0)

Venue: Edifício das Nações Unidas, Avenida das Nações Unidas, CP 109 São Tomé Island

Harnessing international marine and coastal tourism and related environmental and digital services in São Tomé and Príncipe

Background

The Oceans Economy and Trade Strategies (OETS) Phase 2 project supports São Tomé and Príncipe in developing sustainable marine and coastal tourism as a source of trade, economic diversification and resilience. As a Small Island Developing State, the country's development prospects are closely linked to the sustainable use of its ocean, coastal ecosystems, biodiversity and cultural assets.

The project focuses on marine and coastal tourism and on the environmental and digital services that directly support its competitiveness, sustainability and local value creation. These include transport and connectivity, energy, water and wastewater services, and linkages with fisheries, aquaculture, agriculture, handicrafts and other local suppliers.

The designation of the Ilha de São Tomé Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2025, complementing the Príncipe Biosphere Reserve, reinforces the country's potential for nature-based and marine tourism at a time of significant recovery in tourism activity. With tourism accounting for an estimated 11 per cent of GDP and Internet use reaching 59 per cent of the population, the sector offers opportunities for digitalization, service diversification and stronger participation by local producers and communities. However, these opportunities depend on addressing constraints related to physical and digital connectivity, energy, water and waste services, single-use plastics, skills, local supply linkages, data and institutional coordination.

The OETS process is aligned with São Tomé and Príncipe's National Sustainable Development Strategy 2026–2040 and relevant national tourism, blue-economy, climate and biodiversity priorities. The 2026 OETS sectoral fact sheet provides the initial evidence base for the national consultation. Stakeholder inputs will be used to validate the available evidence, identify information gaps and policy priorities, and inform the preparation of the national OETS report and proposed Strategy and Action Plan.

National Consultation Objectives

The OETS São Tomé and Príncipe National Stakeholder Consultation aims to:

- Present the OETS methodology, evidence base and proposed analytical approach;
- Gather national evidence and listen to local stakeholder perspectives on marine and coastal tourism challenges and opportunities in relation to environmental and digital services;
- Identify key opportunities, constraints, data gaps and policy priorities to harnessing international marine and coastal tourism as a source of trade, economic diversification and resilience
- Strengthen coordination, policy coherence and national ownership of the OETS process;
- Define actionable recommendations to inform the national OETS report and proposed Strategy and Action Plan.

»Partners

The Government of the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe and UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office São Tomé and Príncipe (UNRCO).

»Donors

The project is funded by Portugal and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office through its Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP).

Related

Topic

Trade and Environment: Sustainable Marine and Coastal Tourism

Programmes

Oceans Economy and Trade Strategies (OETS)
Sustainable Ocean and Blue Economy
Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) Programme
E-commerce and Digital Economy Programme

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Related Resources

OETS São Tomé and Príncipe project webpage

Project description in Portuguese

Evidence-based and policy-coherent Oceans Economy and Trade Strategies

Event Participation

In-person and Online