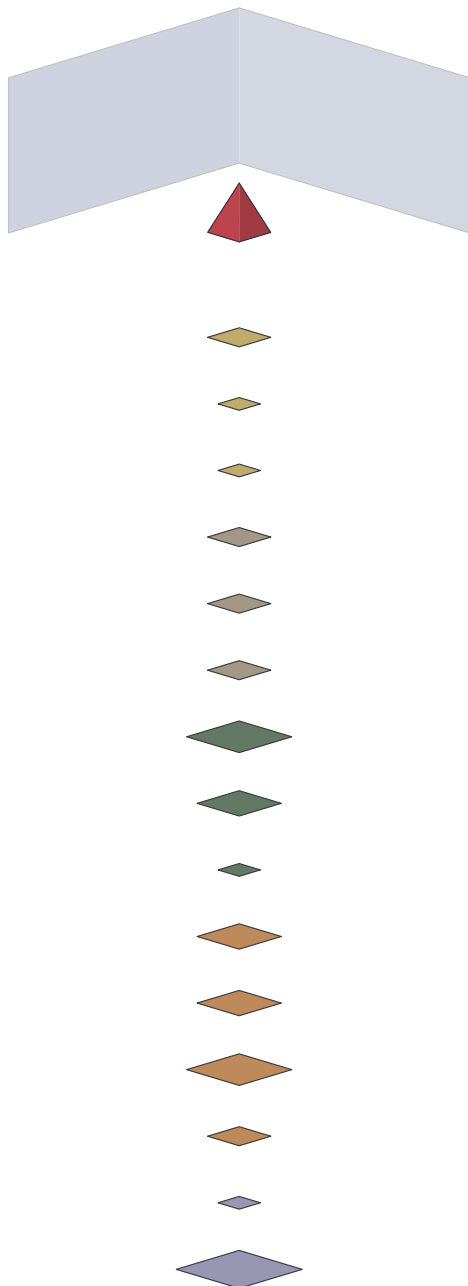




SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE



1.7 CRIMINALITY SCORE

54th of 54 African countries
11th of 11 Central African countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS 1.7

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	1.5
HUMAN SMUGGLING	1
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	1
ARMS TRAFFICKING	1.5
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	1.5
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	1.5
FLORA CRIMES	2.5
FAUNA CRIMES	2
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	1
HEROIN TRADE	2
COCAINE TRADE	2
CANNABIS TRADE	2.5
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	1.5
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	1
FINANCIAL CRIMES	3



CRIMINAL ACTORS 1.7

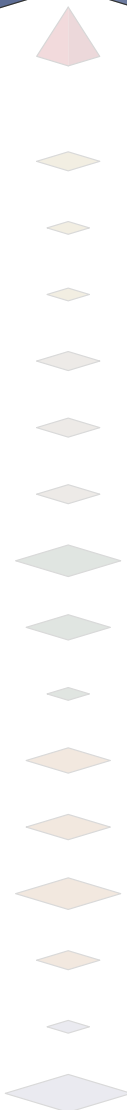
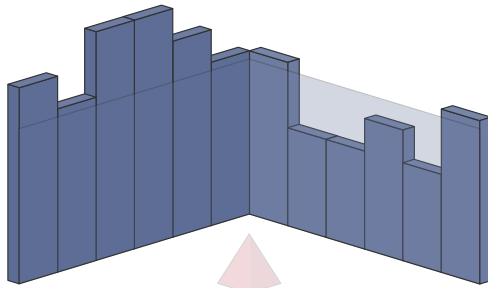
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	1.5
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3
FOREIGN ACTORS	2
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	2



4.92 RESILIENCE SCORE



SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE



4.92

RESILIENCE SCORE

13th of 54 African countries

2nd of 11 Central African countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	6
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	5
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	7
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	6
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	5
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	3
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	4
PREVENTION	3
NON-STATE ACTORS	5



1.7

CRIMINALITY SCORE



CRIMINAL MARKETS **1.7**



CRIMINAL ACTORS **1.7**



CRIMINALITY

Criminal Markets

PEOPLE

São Tomé and Príncipe has been identified as a transit rather than a destination country for human trafficking and prostitution. There have been few confirmed cases of human trafficking in the past, which previously suggested an increasing trend of child labour in agriculture and sex tourism that results in the sexual exploitation of children. However, there is no evidence of continuity of large-scale human trafficking in the country.

There are indications of some level of human smuggling in the country, but no reports of organized criminal groups involved in these activities. Similarly, there is a lack of substantial information about extortion and protection racketeering in São Tomé and Príncipe.

TRADE

Even though there have been a few reports of an illicit firearms trade with seizures of small arms and homemade weapons, the evidence does not suggest that the country has a sizeable arms trafficking market that is connected with transnational networks. However, the Gulf of Guinea is prone to illicit flows of arms, drugs, and humans, and São Tomé and Príncipe faces a potential threat of arms proliferation and piracy should the security situation in the Gulf deteriorate.

There is no significant trade in counterfeit goods in São Tomé and Príncipe and no relevant information was available in relation to this criminal market in the country. Illicit trade in excise goods is also not prevalent in the country, which is primarily limited to small-scale tobacco smuggling mainly from African countries, such as Angola, Gabon, Cameroon, Togo, and Nigeria, that have a maritime connection with São Tomé and Príncipe. There are records of tobacco entering, to a lesser extent, through the international airport, especially via air connections from Africa. Despite high levels of consumption, there does not appear to be any illicit alcohol smuggling in the country.

ENVIRONMENT

Commercial agro-industrial activities as well as residential and commercial development have resulted in alarmingly unsustainable levels of deforestation, but there are no

reports of an organized crime influence on environmental degradation. However, charcoal and other timber products may potentially be taxed by criminal actors at certain border crossings, which could indirectly contribute to the financing of criminal organizations.

The country houses several species at risk of poaching and trafficking. The most important of these are turtles, as their meat and eggs are a common feature in the country's cuisine. The possession, trade and sale of turtle meat have been banned, but a market still exists and consumption continues. However, despite the somewhat weak enforcement of regulations, there has been an active campaign against turtle poaching, which is believed to have had a positive effect. Hunting of primarily invasive mammals and birds remains substantial on the island of São Tomé, although this is largely because of the local demand for their meat, as well as their invasive nature. This has nevertheless placed some bird species at risk of extinction. Isolated cases of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing because of traditions, culture, and beliefs have been reported in the country's waters. São Tomé and Príncipe has a very limited non-renewable resource supply, and as such there are no reports of illegal trading of non-renewables in the country, despite the pervasiveness of this criminal market in neighbouring countries.

DRUGS

Because of its geographical position, São Tomé and Príncipe continues to be a transit country for heroin trafficking in the region. Authorities have detected drug traffickers from Nigeria and Brazil using the country as a transit point for heroin that is destined for Europe and other countries in the Gulf of Guinea. The lack of technical capacity of law enforcement authorities to detect or intercept drug flows suggest that the real scale of the trade may be underestimated. In addition to its role as a transit country, São Tomé and Príncipe serves as a destination country for cocaine trafficking, with primarily Nigerian and Brazilian traffickers responsible for supplying the market. It is estimated that about 80% of the cocaine entering the country is destined for other markets while 20% circulates within the national territory. Corruption and the institutional weaknesses of agents that counteract drug trafficking have an impact on the lack of monitoring of drug trafficking modalities that criminal organizations from neighbouring countries use.



Cannabis continues to be the most consumed and easily accessible drug in São Tomé and Príncipe, and cultivation is facilitated by locals and linked to local gangs. Cannabis is also trafficked from neighbouring countries. However, the volume of imports is still unknown, partly a result of government weakness and government agents who are implicated in this illegal market. As for the synthetic drug market, there is no official data pertaining to its trafficking, commercialization, and consumption in São Tomé and Príncipe. Although synthetic drugs are not usually present in the local market, São Tomé and Príncipe is potentially a transit country for their trafficking because of its location and geographic characteristics. The use of this type of substance in the country is usually related to activities linked to tourism and cultural and leisure events, with few implications for local community consumption.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

There are sporadic reports of the occurrence of cyber-dependent crimes that mainly target private institutions such as banks, and governmental authorities. São Tomé and Príncipe lacks a regulatory framework and law enforcement capacity to counter cyber-dependent crimes.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

There is a lack of reporting on financial crimes in São Tomé and Príncipe. However, because of the internationally widespread perception of corruption in the country, financial crimes are probably more prevalent than they

appear to be, especially embezzlement of public funds by government officials. Tax evasion and avoidance are pervasive, costing the country around US\$120 000 per year. There is a lack of adequate means and specialized personnel to successfully investigate this criminality type.

Criminal Actors

Corruption in the state, and particularly in the judiciary, is an issue with the potential to exacerbate some of the island's vulnerabilities. Another notable organized crime threat in São Tomé and Príncipe continues to be the presence of possible terrorism resulting from maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Remote parts of the island of São Tomé and the Príncipe island can be used as platforms for attacks on ships in international waters. Foreign criminal actors have a presence in São Tomé and Príncipe and continue to manage drug trafficking through the islands. Local gangs are engaged primarily in petty crime, including robberies, hold-ups, and theft, but have limited engagement with larger criminal markets. Although there are isolated incidents of robberies turning violent, this type of crime is rare and there is no indication that it has an organized quality. Citizens have in some cases been recruited to work as drug mules by foreign criminals. There does not appear to be any relevant private sector actors or mafia-style groups involved in criminal activities in São Tomé and Príncipe, even though their existence is difficult to establish with certainty.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

São Tomé and Príncipe is a democracy with a relatively positive track record for upholding civil liberties and democratic norms. The government has exhibited some political will and made efforts, including the creation of more stringent and effective rules, to combat organized crime. Reports continue to indicate that corruption is a considerable problem in São Tomé and Príncipe, and that is being strongly fought, especially with the new president in office. Although perceptions of corruption are moderate, there are still issues pertaining to access to information as well as anti-corruption mechanisms. The government recently launched several investigations

into corruption allegations against former high-ranking officials, but none were tried.

São Tomé and Príncipe has ratified relevant international treaties concerning transnational organized crime. Robust bilateral and multilateral protocols and networks between São Tomé and Príncipe and other states or international organizations have been established. The country is a beneficiary of capacity-building programmes and engages in information exchanges with a variety of regional and global partners. However, the country's Constitution prohibits the extradition of its citizens from the national territory. In recent years, São Tomé and



Príncipe has increased its participation in transnational programmes to prevent human trafficking, along with other Portuguese-speaking nations, because of its position as a transit rather than destination country for this criminal activity. Additionally, the country is working with the World Bank to make its banking system more secure, transparent, and accessible, including prevention measures against illicit money movements. São Tomé and Príncipe has several laws pertaining to organized crime and a relatively robust legal framework. The penal code has integrated principles, contained in the conventions of regional and international organizations, of which São Tomé and Príncipe is part. However, the country lacks comprehensive legislation capable of countering cybercrime.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

In São Tomé and Príncipe, there are a few specialized judicial units in place with the specific aim of countering organized crime. However, the judicial system appears subject to political influence or manipulation in some cases, despite the Constitution and law providing for an independent judiciary. In some cases, this may have resulted in trials being dropped against politically connected people. The judiciary suffers from budgetary and financial difficulties, a deficit of specialized, competent, and trained personnel, and lack of infrastructure. In this respect, the government has started making efforts to modernize the judiciary to ensure independence and prevent corruption. Prison conditions are difficult because of overcrowding, infrastructure, and service failures. Prolonged pre-trial detention has become a problem for some criminal cases, with more than one-fifth of cases in such conditions.

Despite the efforts made in recent years to modernize the institution under international cooperation, the law enforcement of the country often lacks necessary equipment and qualified human resources, which limits its ability to respond to and curb criminality in the country. There is a need for improvement in combating maritime crime, and for this, São Tomé and Príncipe continues to be dependent on Portuguese and foreign vessels and warships. This need is particularly pressing considering the long coastline and vast maritime borders that are difficult to police and monitor. Overall, oversight of national police, customs and immigration authorities, as well as the military, is adequate. Nevertheless, citizens express high levels of mistrust because of perceived inefficiency and corruption, as well as reports of police mistreatment.

São Tomé and Príncipe's proximity to the Niger Delta, where many pirate groups are based, raises attack risks on vessels serving the island nation and the nascent oil industry. The territorial integrity of the country is guaranteed under the Constitution of São Tomé and Príncipe, which is controlled by its armed forces with inefficient resources at their disposal to operate unilaterally. Therefore, foreign assistance greatly supports the carrying out of territorial maritime surveillance and defence.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

There is little evidence that the country is exposed to large-scale illicit financial activity such as money laundering. However, its Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism protocol does not currently meet global standards, and its regulatory and supervisory processes lack the capacity to respond to money laundering and terrorist financing risks, and to enforce financial regulations. Although the government is working to address these deficiencies, they continue to be a source of vulnerability for the country. São Tomé and Príncipe is a member of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa, a Financial Action Task Force-type regional body. As a result of a long-standing institutional weakness in the control of money laundering, in 2021 the government of São Tomé and Príncipe gathered different institutions at an event aimed at strengthening cooperation between entities with legislative, executive, and judicial responsibilities in the prevention and fight against corruption, money laundering, and organized crime.

São Tomé and Príncipe is a lower-middle-income country with a fragile economy that is highly vulnerable to external shocks. The country's economy is experiencing a slowdown with increasing inflation that is linked to the war in Ukraine, increasing fuel prices, as well as bad weather caused by climate change. The population suffers from high unemployment and those in employment typically earn low wages. A poor regulatory environment not conducive to entrepreneurship, in addition to high levels of unemployment and low wages, severely increase incentives to engage in organized criminal activity and this makes the country unattractive for investment.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Although some government initiatives to improve support for victims of organized crime exist, there are no established assistance programmes for victims of organized crime in São Tomé and Príncipe. Moreover, although the strategic government plan contains some



crime prevention measures, the country does not have an explicit organized crime prevention policy. Such policies are still incipient and lack external support.

NGOs are not restricted from operating, and regularly cooperate with authorities to address issues such as child labour. Nevertheless, the sector is relatively small, and a lack of funding hampers the ability of NGOs to operate in an independent and effective manner. Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed and largely respected in practice in the country, although the media sector is limited in size, influenced by governments, and a degree of self-censorship is common. Although there are no restrictions on online media, the sector is poorly developed and only 42% of the population has internet access.

