



**SAO TOME AND
PRINCIPE**

MANAGING THE
IMPACTS OF
COVID-19

COVID-19: EMERGENCY STATE OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE SINCE 18TH MARCH

April 2020

Considering the emergency of the public health caused by COVID-19 and the need to take measures to prevent and combat the expansion of this pandemic, the President of the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, after Government hearing, followed by authorization from the National Assembly, declared, through Presidential Decree no. 3/2020, of 18th March 2020 ("DP 81/20"), the state of national emergency.

Extending to the entire national territory and following the framework of the recommendations of the World Health Organization, the state of emergency commenced on 18th March, initially having a duration of 15 days, and renewed on 31st March, through Presidential Decree no. 4/2020, for additional 15 days, and may also be extended for equal periods, up to a limit of 90 days.

Decree-Law no. 2/20, of 18th March 2020 ("DL 2/20") established the following measures starting on 18th March and for the period of the emergency status:

- a) All foreign citizens are prohibited from entering the country;
- b) Nationals and foreign residents, who return to the country, will be subject to mandatory quarantine and duly accompanied by health agents and police authorities;
- c) The entry of technical and governmental missions are authorized at the invitation of the State of São Tomé, under the condition of presenting a coronavirus screening test carried out at the airports of origin;
- d) The landing of charter flights in airports of São Tomé and Príncipe and docking of cruise ships in the two ports are prohibited;
- e) The supply of hospital materials and consumables, under an emergency basis, will be taken care of by charter flights, in the absence of commercial flights;
- f) With regards to cargo ships, passenger ships and recreational boats, the disembarkation of crew and passengers at the ports of São Tomé and Príncipe is prohibited;
- g) Classes in all public and private schools in the country are suspended with effect at 6 pm on 20th March;
- h) All public gatherings of a cultural nature, recreational, religious, sports or ludic, including the functioning of the nightclubs, "entertainment events" and popular parties are prohibited with effect at 6 pm on 20th March; and
- i) Issuance and assignment of diplomatic and service passports to State agents is suspended, except for emergency situations duly validated by the Prime Minister and Head of Government.

On 6th April 2020, the Government received results of the tests carried out on about 25 people, and, because four tests were positive, it was decided through the DL 04/2020, 07th April to adopt additional measures, including:

- a) Suspension of all maritime and air connections between the islands of São Tomé and of the Island of Príncipe, except for health emergency situations duly authorized by the Prime Minister and Head of Government;
- b) Suspension of all visits to patients admitted to hospitals, health centers, nursing homes and penitentiary;
- c) Implementation of a single schedule in the Public Service, which changes from 7:30 am to 1:00 pm, and, in a job rotation system, reduction of non-essential public services employees, giving special attention to employees with minor children;
- d) Implementation of a single schedule for stores and supermarkets, which is now from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. The Municipal and District markets are only open until 4:00 pm and the sales on sidewalks are strictly prohibited;
- e) Closure of all restaurants, bars, cafes, pastry shops and caravan, with the exception of those with home delivery services;

- f) Limitation of occupancy of passenger seats, in taxis and private vehicles, up to half of the legal capacity of vehicles;
- g) Prohibition of meetings, gatherings and meetings with more than 10 people;
- h) Obligation to respect the sanitary distance of 2 meters, use of masks by employees and availability of washbasins or alcohol for the disinfection of clients and users, in all institutions, public or private, that provide services to the public.

The measures mentioned above will come into force at 00:00 on 8th April 2020 and remain in force as long as the State of Emergency in Public Health prevails.

The Council of Minister, still in the scope of the prevention of COVID-19, also decided the following:

- a) Immediate activation of the isolation center complementary to the Central Hospital;
- b) Reinforcement of stock for medicines, consumables and reagents to combat COVID-19 and other diseases that are plaguing the country;
- c) Acceleration of contacts with World Health Organization for the urgent dispatch of the screening laboratory of the COVID-19 and the field hospital;
- d) Speeding up the process of purchasing ventilators and other materials necessary to combat COVID-19.

The violation of the provisions of DL 04/2020 incurs the respective authors in criminal liability, without prejudice to any disciplinary or civil liability that may arise. From the economic and financial point of view, due to the implemented restriction measures, the tourism sector is already suffering a severe damages, with all hotel units closed. National legislation does not provide for a *lay-off*, nor have any measures been approved to protect the private sector from the strong economic and financial constraints.

However, support from the IMF, World Bank and other multilateral organizations is expected, either in the field of medical and hospital equipment, or in the context of incentives and economic and financial aid to the private sector, in general, and tourism, in particular.

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