

## “CHINA’S SUPPORT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR DEVELOPMENT”

**PEREGRINO DA COSTA**



For the Rector of the Public University of Sao Tome and Principe, AULP is very important for his country. In the Association, people could share the networks, and it is essential for the development of contacts and the joint projects in higher education.

After 16 years of development of polytechnic education, Sao Tome is now focusing on higher education of university, which is fundamental in reality and geographical-natural potential for the country - rich in agricultural and maritime potential and with recognized world biosphere reserve. Invoking a tradition of emigration of Chinese families to Sao Tome, via Macao, Peregrino da Costa recognizes the importance of Sao Tome’s relationship with China. He stated that his country has started a Mandarin teaching program, and appreciated the support to the students of Sao Tome given by the People’s Republic of China and Macao.

### **What is your opinion about AULP?**

Public University of Sao Tome and Principe (UPSTP) is one of the members of the Association. Of course we value very much this role and its mission. The objectives of AULP are also related to our objectives, because the job of these universities is mostly done in the network. So, being a member of the Association offers us one more opportunity to meet with other similar institutions, to establish our network of contacts and to develop joint projects.

### **Enjoying the benefits of being in a network like the one that AULP enables is the primary advantage lies in that institution?**

Yes, it is essential.

### **UPSTP is still very new. It was formally established in July 2014, right?**

Yes, but we have already been a member of AULP for 16 years. Back then, we were the Polytechnic Institute of Sao Tome and Principe, which was terminated to make way for the new university.

### **What change did this imply, particularly in view of the higher education of Sao Tome and Principe?**

It was a very important step forward. In accordance with the Law on the Education System, Sao Tome and Principe defines the structure of the Education System with several subsystems, among which is the higher education, which includes two categories: university and polytechnic education. Over the past 16 years, we have a lot of development in polytechnic education, especially in teachers’ training. Now, with the establishment of the University, we are already moving forward with the development of the university education, accompanying with the continual growth of the polytechnic education.

### **Is there any plan to create more universities in your country?**

No plans for public universities, but there may be some interests for private ones. At this moment, we have one public university and two private universities.

### **Taking into account the geographic characteristics of Sao Tome and Principe, could research projects be developed?**

It is not worth to have a university without research. Research is an essential contribution, including for forecasting situations. We are a green country with strong agricultural potential. For example, the Principe Autonomous Region is a world biosphere reserve. We must guarantee its continuity; so many studies have to be done in agro-food sector, which is fundamental for us. Some jobs are already completed, others are under planning.

### **How important is the Portuguese language in the relationship between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries?**

In 1900, we already had Chinese contracted in Sao Tome and Principe. Since Chinese citizens appeared in the country, the language issue became important. Because after one person’s arrival, the families would come, then businesses were set up. Today, we still have several families in Sao Tome who are the descendants of these immigrants. Many of them are from Macao. The Portuguese language is the medium of communication, but we realized that in the case of our university, in our relationship with China, our communication does not merely lie in the Portuguese language. Our language center is already working on the training program in Mandarin.



### **Within the scope of the Confucius Institute?**

No, it’s a specific program. But it does not mean that we cannot have a Confucius Institute in the future. We believe that both Portuguese and Chinese languages are important. Mandarin is the most spoken language in the world, but Portuguese is also one of the most spoken languages, and it continues to grow in importance and diffusion. For us, the expansion of these two languages also means the development of our university. There are some projects that we cannot finish without talking with our partners. Therefore, language is predominant.

### **You attribute this predominance in equal parts to Chinese and Portuguese. In other words, to have Chinese people to learn Portuguese is as important as to have Sao Tome people to speak Chinese?**

Yes, it is extremely important.

### **Are there any plan for exchanging Chinese students and Sao Tome students?**

Our university is now preparing a proposal to the University of Macau to carry out these programs. In fact, we would like that this cooperation includes the education of Mandarin. We just do not step forward the details because our university is still very new, and there are several things underway.

### **China might be a key partner of Sao Tome and Principe in the development of Sao Tome’s education?**

We have students in China, including Macao, with the prospect of future development of our higher education. They are supported by the scholarships from China, otherwise it was impossible for us to carry out the program. We would like this aid could be increased, covering more students and also let us carry out the infrastructure constructions in our country. China’s support is fundamental to our development. ●

