

## The Republic of the Congo



**Background:** Established as a Belgian colony in 1908, the Republic of the Congo gained its independence in 1960, but its early years were marred by political and social instability. Col. Joseph MOBUTU seized power and declared himself president in a November 1965 coup. He subsequently changed his name - to MOBUTU Sese Seko - as well as that of the country - to Zaire. MOBUTU retained his position for 32 years through several subsequent sham elections as well as through the use of brutal force. Ethnic strife and civil war, touched off by a massive inflow of refugees in 1994 from fighting in Rwanda and Burundi, led in May 1997 to the toppling of the MOBUTU regime by a rebellion led by Laurent KABILA. He renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC), but in August 1998 his regime was itself challenged by an insurrection backed by Rwanda and Uganda. Troops from Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad, and Sudan intervened to support the Kinshasa regime. A cease-fire was signed in July 1999 by the DROC, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda, Namibia, Rwanda, and Congolese armed rebel groups, but sporadic fighting continued. Laurent KABILA was assassinated in January 2001 and his son Joseph KABILA was named head of state. In October 2002, the new president was successful in negotiating the withdrawal of Rwandan forces occupying eastern Congo; two months later, the Pretoria Accord was signed by all remaining warring parties to end the fighting and establish a government of national unity. A transitional government was set up in July 2003; Joseph KABILA remains as president and is joined by four vice presidents representing the former government, former rebel groups, and the political opposition

**Location:** Central Africa, northeast of Angola

**Area: total:** 2,345,410 sq km

*land:* 2,267,600 sq km

*water:* 77,810 sq km

**Coastline:** 37 km

**Climate:** tropical; hot and humid in equatorial river basin; cooler and drier in southern highlands; cooler and wetter in eastern highlands; north of Equator - wet season April to October, dry season December to February; south of Equator - wet season November to March, dry season April to October

**Terrain:** vast central basin is a low-lying plateau; mountains in east

**Natural resources:** cobalt, copper, niobium, tantalum, petroleum, industrial and gem diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, uranium, coal, hydropower, timber

**Environment - current issues:** poaching threatens wildlife populations; water pollution; deforestation; refugees responsible for significant deforestation, soil erosion, and wildlife poaching; mining of minerals (coltan - a mineral used in creating capacitors, diamonds, and gold) causing environmental damage

**People**

**Population:** 60,085,804

**Population growth rate:** 2.98% (2005 est.)

**Net migration rate:** -0.17 migrant(s)/1,000 population

*note:* fighting between the Congolese Government and Uganda- and Rwanda-backed Congolese rebels spawned a regional war in DROC in August 1998, which left 1.8 million Congolese internally displaced and caused 300,000 Congolese refugees to flee to surrounding countries (2005 est.)

**Languages:** French (official), Lingala (a lingua franca trade language), Kingwana (a dialect of Kiswahili or Swahili), Kikongo, Tshiluba

**Country name:** *conventional long form:* Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Government type:** dictatorship; presumably undergoing a transition to representative government

**Capital:** Kinshasa

**Independence:** 30 June 1960 (from Belgium)

**Legal system:** based on Belgian civil law system and tribal law; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

**Executive branch:** *chief of state:* President Joseph KABILA

**International organization participation:** ACCT, ACP, AfDB, AU, CEPGL, FAO, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCT, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO (correspondent), ITU, MIGA, NAM, OPCW (signatory), PCA, SADC, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UPU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, WTO

**Economy - overview:** The economy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo - a nation endowed with vast potential wealth - has declined drastically since the mid-1980s. The war, which began in August 1998, dramatically reduced national output and government revenue, increased external debt, and resulted in the deaths of perhaps 3.5 million people from war, famine, and disease. Foreign businesses curtailed operations due to uncertainty about the outcome of the conflict, lack of infrastructure, and the difficult operating environment. Conditions improved in late 2002 with the withdrawal of a large portion of the invading foreign troops. Several IMF and World Bank missions

have met with the government to help it develop a coherent economic plan, and President KABILA has begun implementing reforms. Much economic activity lies outside the GDP data. Economic stability, aided by international donors, improved in 2003-04, although an uncertain legal framework, corruption, and a lack of openness in government policy continues to hamper growth. In 2005, renewed activity in the mining sector, the source of most exports, could boost Kinshasa's fiscal position and GDP growth.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$42.74 billion (2004 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 7.5% (2004 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$700 (2004 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:** *agriculture:* 55%

*industry:* 11%

*services:* 34% (2000 est.)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** 14% (2003 est.)

**Labor force:** 14.51 million (1993 est.)

**Budget:** *revenues:* \$269 million

*expenditures:* \$244 million, including capital expenditures of \$24 million

(1996 est.)

**Agriculture - products:** coffee, sugar, palm oil, rubber, tea, quinine, cassava (tapioca), palm oil, bananas, root crops, corn, fruits; wood products

**Industries:** mining (diamonds, copper, zinc), mineral processing, consumer products (including textiles, footwear, cigarettes, processed foods and beverages), cement, commercial ship repair

**Oil - production:** 24,000 bbl/day (2001 est.)

**Oil - proved reserves:** 1.538 billion bbl (1 January 2002)

**Natural gas - proved reserves:** 104.8 billion cu m (1 January 2002)

**Exports:** \$1.417 billion f.o.b. (2002 est.)

**Exports - commodities:** diamonds, copper, crude oil, coffee, cobalt

**Exports - partners:** Belgium 42.5%, Finland 17.8%, Zimbabwe 12.2%, US 9.2%, China 6.5% (2004)

**Imports:** \$933 million f.o.b. (2002 est.)

**Imports - commodities:** foodstuffs, mining and other machinery, transport equipment, fuels

**Imports - partners:** South Africa 18.5%, Belgium 15.6%, France 10.9%, US 6.2%, Germany 5.9%, Kenya 4.9% (2004)

**Currency:** Congolese franc (CDF)

**Exchange rates:** Congolese francs per US dollar - 401.04 (2004), 405.34 (2003), 346.49 (2002), 206.62 (2001), 21.82 (2000)

#### **Transportation**

**Railways:** *total:* 5,138 km

*narrow gauge:* 3,987 km 1.067-m gauge (858 km electrified); 125 km

1.000-m gauge; 1,026 km 0.600-m gauge (2004)

**Highways:** *total:* 157,000 km (including 30 km of expressways)

*paved:* NA km

*unpaved:* NA km (1999 est.)

**Waterways:** 15,000 km (navigation on the Congo curtailed by fighting)

**Pipelines:** gas 54 km; oil 71 km (2004)

**Ports and harbors:** Banana, Boma, Bukavu, Bumba, Goma, Kalemie, Kindu, Kinshasa, Kisangani, Matadi, Mbandaka

**Merchant marine:** *registered in other countries:* 1

**Airports:** 230