

KEY FACTS

Official name: République Démocratique du Congo (Democratic Republic of Congo) (DRC)

Head of State: President Joseph Kabila Kabange (elected 2006; re-elected 28 Nov 2011)

Head of government: Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo (from 19 Apr 2012)

Ruling party: Caretaker-coalition led by Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (PPRD) (People's Party of Reconstruction and Democracy) with Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (PLU) (United Lumumbist Party) and Union des Démocrates Mobutistes (UDM) (Union of Mobutist Democrats) (elected 2006; re-elected 28 Nov 2011)

Area: 2,345,409 square km

Population: 74.75 million (2012)*

Capital: Kinshasa

Official language: French

Currency: Congolese franc (Cf)

Exchange rate: Cf923.50 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$236 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 7.11% (2012)*

GDP: US\$17.70 billion (2012)*

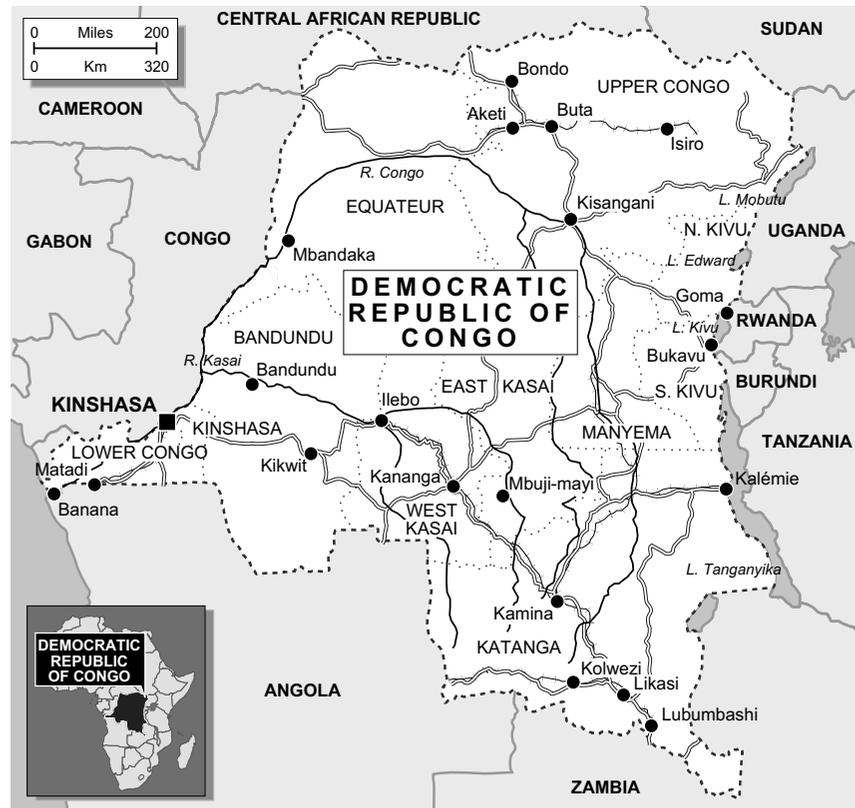
Inflation: 9.35% (2012)*

Balance of trade: US\$556.30 million (2011)

Nota

Martin Kobler, UN special envoy to the DRC, reported in October that the M23 was 'all but finished as a military threat' after it abandoned nearly all its military positions in the east and was reduced to a small triangle close to the Rwandan border. Within hours of the government declaring a military victory, the M23 rebel group said it was ending its insurgency and its leader surrendered in Uganda on 7 November. However, on 12 November minister of information, Lambert Mende, said the deal could not be signed, not because of its content, but because of the title. He reported it should be called a 'declaration' not an 'accord' since that gave too much credibility to the rebels.

Democratic Republic of Congo



Agriculture and mining have been the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) main economic pillars since 1960 and still account for about half of GDP (in 2012, agriculture 40 per cent and extractive industries 12 per cent). About 70 per cent of the population live in rural areas and depend on the two sectors. Export earnings also come chiefly from mining (88 per cent in 2012).

According to the *African Economic Outlook 2013* (AEO), published jointly by the African Development Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the DRC has substantial agricultural, oil and mining potential. Its water resources can provide great amounts of electricity and safe water and 60 million of its 100 million hectares of dense tropical forest can be sustainably used. Its sedimentary basins contain more than 1,100 minerals, including 30 per cent of the world's diamond reserves, 60 per

cent of its cobalt and 10 per cent of its copper. However, these riches have not led to the country's development but have on the contrary fed wars between 1990 and 2000, which themselves encouraged fraud and so limited the contribution of these resources to the economy. About 60 per cent of the minerals mined in eastern DRC are smuggled out and appear in the export statistics of neighbouring countries.

Promulgation in 2002 of new agriculture, forestry and mining laws and regulations amid high world prices helped persuade several big multinational firms (BHP Billiton, De Beers and Phelps) to set up in the DRC and revived forestry and mining activity. The 2008–09 world recession caused a big drop in prices of the country's main exports and thus a big fall in tax revenue. More than 40 mining firms shut down in Katanga province alone with the loss of about 300,000 jobs. Mineral prices rose again with the world economic

recovery in 2010 and the country's extractive industries revived once more.

Oil exploration and output is still very small because of structural problems that have slowed down reforms needed for the sector to grow. Results are also poor because of low investment and outdated equipment which has led to closing some wells. Production fell between 2010 and 2012 because the firm Perenco was upgrading its equipment, but output should rise in the next few years as potential new oilfields are brought on stream by Soco International (in Virunga National Park, although there is international condemnation of despoiling one of Africa's most iconic parks) and Total (Lake Albert). Congolese oil is heavy-grade and not refined much before export and so does not yield much revenue for the government.

The energy sector has performed poorly since 1960 because of the outdated network and equipment of the national water firm Regideso and electricity company Société nationale d'électricité (SNEL) and their technical and financial problems. Their equipment is badly maintained and new investment is virtually non-existent. The sector is a drag on growth and very costly to industry and households. SNEL serves only 10 per cent of the population, service is poor and it cannot meet demand, with lines in Kinshasa and from Inga to Katanga overloaded. Drinking water supply is steadily getting worse, with only 46 per cent of the population having access.

The government has sold shares in mining and forestry operations to firms where the structure of the management is not clear. It signed contracts in 2008 worth US\$9 billion with a group of Chinese firms granting mining concessions in exchange for providing basic infrastructure. Gécamines and Sodimico sold their shares in four large mines without making public the details of the deals. These deals are very controversial and some involved knockdown prices to owners of firms based in tax-havens whose real identities are hidden. The risk of embezzlement and loss of revenue is very great and the authorities should ban secret talks with such firms.

To promote good management of natural resources, the DRC set up a national committee on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2009. Under a UN security and stabilisation support strategy, five offices each offering full national mining services have been set up in North and South Kivu to improve traceability of products and maintain

close links with the mining areas. The government decided in 2012 to review the mining and oil laws and regulations to make them much more transparent and stricter about bidding for contracts and protecting local communities. Such measures should combat corruption and help get the best possible prices for the country's natural resources.

The economy

The economy grew 7.2 per cent in 2012 despite difficult world economic and financial conditions and a worrying domestic political and security situation. The performance was largely due to extractive industries, trade, agriculture and construction, macroeconomic stability and robust domestic demand. Growth should continue, to 8.2 per cent in 2013 and 9.4 per cent in 2014, in the light of world demand for minerals and the major investment in the sector in recent years.

Macroeconomic policy in 2012 aimed to cut inflation, stabilise the exchange rate and boost foreign currency reserves to ensure greater predictability and help the economy grow. Tight public finance management and easing of monetary policy are helping to curb inflation better and it fell to 6.4 per cent from 15.4 per cent in 2011. The Banque du Congo (central bank) substantially cut its key interest rate from 21 per cent to 6 per cent by the end of 2012 year-on-year to boost credit to the economy. Higher exchange reserves from a resurgence of exports increased coverage of imports to 8.6 weeks at the end of the year from 7.2 weeks a year earlier.

The turnover tax was replaced by value added tax (VAT) in 2012 to encourage

growth. The World Bank report *Doing Business 2013* demoted the DRC one place, from 180 (out of 185 surveyed) to 181 overall, because of problems in getting electricity, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders and enforcing contracts, though some progress was made in dealing with construction permits, registering property and resolving insolvency. But prospects should improve with the government joining the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA).

The country's poverty contrasts with the huge potential of its natural resources. The social situation remained fragile in 2012 despite continuing economic growth. Low pay, difficulties in finding work and serious malnutrition undermine the health of the population.

March 23 Movement

The situation was very difficult in North Kivu province at the end of 2012 because of a new rebellion by the March 23 Movement (M23) demanding that the government respect agreements it made with the former rebel movement it succeeded, the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP) (National Congress for the Defence of the People), and contesting violently the 2011 general elections. This lawlessness enables minerals to be illegally mined, harms agriculture, movement of food supplies and tax collection in the rebel area, and has delayed the new school year in some places.

However, after 18 months of intermittent skirmishes in North Kivu, peace talks between the M23 and government restarted in September 2013 after pressure

KEY INDICATORS		Democratic Republic of Congo				
	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*66.41	*68.41	*70.46	*72.57	*74.75
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	11.60	11.10	13.10	15.70	*17.70
GDP per capita	US\$	175	171	186	216	*236
GDP real growth	%	6.0	2.8	7.2	6.9	*7.1
Inflation	%	18.0	46.2	23.5	15.5	*9.3
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	6,836.0	1,123.0	8,472.9	9,417.9	–
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	6,711.0	4,949.0	8,042.5	8,915.6	–
Balance of trade	US\$m	125.0	-3,826.0	435.4	556.3	–
Current account	US\$m	-1,461.0	-1,123.1	-1,061.0	-1,814.0	*-2,192.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	77.7	1,615.4	1,840.9	1,948.9	–
Foreign exchange	US\$m	71.8	1,002.8	1,297.0	1,384.7	–
Exchange rate	per US\$	552.00	809.79	905.91	922.80	917.27
* estimated figure						

from regional leaders. Martin Kobler, UN special envoy to the DRC, reported in October that the M23 was 'all but finished as a military threat' after it abandoned nearly all its military positions in the east and was reduced to a small triangle close to the Rwandan border. In early November the government announced that it had retaken all territory that had been overrun by the M23. Within hours of the government declaring a military victory, the M23 rebel group said it was ending its insurgency and its leader surrendered in Uganda on 7 November.

The economy

The AEO notes that the fundamental shape of the economy has not changed much since 1990. Agriculture and extractive industries are its main pillars accounting for 50 per cent of GDP. Mining tax revenue is paltry. Despite the size of agriculture in GDP, 75 per cent of Congolese do not have enough to eat.

Better world mineral prices in 2012 helped extractive industries, while exchange rate stability and upgrading roads helped trade to expand. The government's programme of major public works produced another solid performance by the construction sector. Manufacturing and transport were not very significant and the energy sector dampened overall growth.

Agriculture is about 40 per cent of GDP, employs 70 per cent of the population and production was up in 2012 due to coffee (9.2 per cent), logs and sawn wood (0.1 per cent) and the repair of several agricultural roads. Food crops did slightly better thanks to government support for small farmers in recent years (distribution of tractors, fertiliser and improved seeds). The agricultural drive launched by the government in 2012 should boost the sector over the next few years. The government is allotting US\$23 million for crops, fisheries and animal production, upkeep of agricultural roads, improving the lives of farmers, especially better access to drinking water.

Extractive industries did well because of good world prices and the substantial investment they have attracted in recent years (about US\$2 billion for Tenke Fungurume Mining, US\$1.5 billion for Kamoto Copper Company and US\$750 million for Metalkol). Output was mixed, with (up to September 2012 year-on-year) increased volume of copper (24.6 per cent), cobalt (22.27 per cent) and zinc (5.65 per cent) and a fall in production of diamonds (-6.9 per cent) and oil (-1.1 per cent); Copper

output was 500,000 tonnes in 2012 and gold less than a tonne.

Manufacturing only accounted for 2.08 percentage points of growth in 2012 because of outdated equipment, limited capacity to use new technology, the effect of foreign competition and shortage of electricity. The energy sector hampered growth slightly (0.01 percentage points) because of the longstanding technical and financial problems of SNEL and Regideso, along with non-payment of arrears by the government accounting for annual losses of US\$30 million (electricity) and US\$50 million (water).

The tertiary sector once again contributed quite substantially to growth in 2012. The expansion of commerce was due to exchange rate stability, better roads and decongestion at the ports of Matadi and Boma. Transport and communications accounted for 3.7 percentage points of GDP growth and telecommunications grew 8.2 per cent due to increased demand after two new operators (Africell and Orange) entered the local market. Some sectors of transport did less well than in 2011, including railways because of the poor condition of rolling stock.

The combined effects of investment in the extractive industries in recent years, the new agricultural drive, and of the upgrading of infrastructure (especially introduction of fibre-optic cables) could push overall growth to 8.2 per cent in 2013 and 9.4 per cent in 2014. A start to production by new mining firms (Banro, Kibali Gold and Rand Gold) could also stimulate the economy. Copper output should exceed 600,000 tonnes in 2013 and reach about 1 million in 2014, while gold production is estimated at 2 tonnes in 2013 and 14 tonnes in 2014. The healthy mining sector should boost other parts of the economy.

These forecasts depend on world mineral prices and the security situation in the east of the country. Continued fighting may undermine business confidence and slow down activity because of the pressure of military spending on public finances. Poor energy supplies and a resulting timid business climate could undermine macroeconomic stability.

Risk assessment

Politics	Poor
Economy	Poor
Regional stability	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the British, Dutch, Portuguese and

French bought slaves from the Kongo Empire.

1870 King Leopold II of Belgium set up a private venture to exploit the riches of the Kongo Empire.

1879–87 British explorer, Henry Stanley was commissioned to establish Belgian authority over the Congo basin.

1884–85 European governments recognised Leopold's claim to the Congo basin.

1885 Leopold established the Congo Free State, which he headed.

1891–92 Belgium conquered Katanga.

1892–94 Belgium conquered eastern Congo, which was controlled by Arab and east African merchants.

1908 The Belgian state annexed Congo following atrocities carried out by Leopold's officials.

1959 A nationalist uprising based in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) began the disintegration of Belgian colonial authority.

1960 Congo gained independence. Joseph Kasavuba became president. The Belgian community fled and too few professionals were left to run the government. Chaos ensued as the diamond and copper mining province of Katanga attempted to secede under the leadership of Joseph Tshombe.

1961 Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was deposed and murdered, allegedly by Katangan separatists. Marshal Joseph Mobutu was appointed prime minister. UN soldiers began disarming the Katangese soldiers on behalf of the Kasavuba government.

1963 Tshombe agreed to end the Katangan separatist war.

1964 President Kasavuba dismissed Mobutu and appointed Tshombe as prime minister.

1965 Mobutu seized power after a coup.

1971 Congo was renamed Zaïre. Mobutu renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko.

1973–74 Mobutu nationalised foreign firms and forced foreign investors out of the country.

1977 French, Belgian and Moroccan troops fought an attack on Katanga by Angolan-based rebels.

1989 Zaïre defaulted on its debt servicing to Belgium; the economy began to deteriorate as development programmes were suspended.

1990 Mobutu appointed a transitional government and lifted the ban on multi-party politics.

1991 A series of short-lived coalition governments were presided over by President Mobutu, who retained control of security and key ministries.

1993 Rival pro- and anti-Mobutu governments were formed

1996 Tutsi rebels, in eastern Zaire, captured much of the eastern border area

1997 Mobutu fled to Togo when the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération (AFDL) (Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation), led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, seized Kinshasa, after a seven-month campaign. Kabila had been backed by Tutsi rebels and the Rwandan government. Zaïre was renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Kabila became president. All government institutions were dissolved and a new constitution drafted. Mobutu Sese Seko died in Morocco.

1998 The Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Goma (RCD-Goma) (Congolese Democratic Coalition) was formed, supported by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, and aimed at overthrowing Kabila, who was backed by Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola. A full-scale civil war broke out. Peace talks began in Zambia but were ultimately unsuccessful.

1999 A split developed between the Mouvement pour la Libération Congolaise (MLC) (Movement for Congolese Liberation) backed by Uganda and the RCD-Goma supported by Rwanda. The six countries involved in the war signed a cease-fire, and the RCD-Goma and MLC signed later.

2000 The UN authorised a 5,500-strong force to monitor the supposed cease-fire; fighting continued between government and rebel forces and Rwandan and Ugandan forces.

2001 President Kabila was assassinated. His son, Major General Joseph Kabila became president. A peace agreement between DRC, Uganda and Rwanda allowed foreign troops to withdraw. An estimated 2.5 million people had died in the conflict; the UN reported that the warring parties had continued the fighting to mask plundering of DRC's rich mineral assets.

2002 Goma was devastated by the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. Rwanda and the DRC signed a peace deal whereby Rwanda withdrew troops and DRC disarmed and arrested Rwandan Hutu militia held responsible for the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The DRC government signed a peace deal with the two main rebel groups. UN sponsored power-sharing talks were undertaken in South Africa.

2003 A transitional constitution sanctioned an interim government pending democratic elections to be held within two years. Leaders of the principal former rebel groups were sworn in as vice presidents.

2004 The massacre of 160 mostly Tutsi DRC refugees in Burundi prompted renewed warnings of war, and the Tutsi-led RCD-Goma, the former main rebel group during the DRC's civil war, suspended its participation in the power-sharing government.

2005 Nine UN peacekeepers were killed in the north-east; UN troops retaliated, killing over 50 militia members. The national assembly adopted a draft constitution, which had been agreed by former rebel groups. A referendum on the new constitution was given resounding approval for the changes, with 84.31 per cent voting 'yes'. The result paved the way for presidential and parliamentary elections.

2006 Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the opposition Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS) (Union for Democracy and Social Progress) withdrew his call for a boycott of the general elections. In the first free democratic elections since the 1960s over 9,700 candidates contested 500 seats in the national assembly. In presidential elections, incumbent Joseph Kabila won 58.05 per cent of the vote and Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba 41.95 per cent; turnout was over 70 per cent. Antoine Gizenga of the Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (Palu) (United Lumumbist Party) was appointed prime minister.

2007 In senate elections Kabila's Alliance pour la Majorité Présidentielle (AMP) (Alliance for a Presidential Majority) won 58 seats (out of 108). The Union pour la Nation Congolaise (UNC) (Congolese National Party) coalition won 21 (including a seat for Jean Pierre Bemba, its leader). The Communauté Economique des Pays des Grands Lacs (CEPGL) (Great Lakes Countries Economic Community) was re-launched by Burundi, DRC and Rwanda. CEPGL is intended to promote regional economic co-operation and integration. Rebel leader, Laurent Nkunda, fighting in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, declared that the ceasefire with government forces had ended. Fighting displaced over 300,000 people from the area to UNHCR camps near the city of Goma, while many more fled into rebel held territory and out of reach of international aid. Renegade leader Kasereka Kabamba was forced to surrender to government forces in North Kivu province.

2008 Jean-Pierre Bemba was arrested (in Belgium) to face charges of war crimes at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Bemba had been in exile since being accused of high treason in DRC for refusing to disarm his militia, following his defeat in 2006 presidential elections. The president appointed Adolphe Muzito (Palu) as prime minister.

2009 Rwandan troops crossed into DRC in a joint military operation to eliminate Rwandan Hutu militia, exiled in DRC since 1994 and causing widespread mayhem in DRC's eastern province, destabilising the region. Former general and Tutsi rebel

leader Laurent Nkunda (Conseil National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP) (National Council for the Defence of the People) was arrested in Rwanda, having fled from his stronghold in Bunagana. Another, Hema, militia leader, Thomas Lubanga, caught in 2005, went on trial before the ICC, charged with the use of child soldiers and the killing of rival militia of the Lendu tribe in Ituri Province. A Swiss court ruled that the assets of former president Mobutu Sese Seko, held in Swiss banks, must be returned to his family. It rejected the appeal that the money (over US\$6 million) should be returned to DRC, because the legal claim to the money took too long to be brought before the court.

2010 The Paris Club of creditors agreed to forego almost half DRC debts in an agreement. Of the US\$3 billion covered by the agreement, around US\$1.3 will be cancelled and the remainder rescheduled and debt service payments deferred until 1 July 2012. The UN agreed to withdraw its peacekeeping troops, at the request of the government. A US\$12 billion debt relief package was agreed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the country would no longer have to carry its heavy debt service burden on its revenue and foreign exchange reserves. Army commander Sadoke Kokunda Mayele was arrested on charges of encouraging the gang rape of more than 300 persons; he was handed over by his fellow rebels. The trial began of former vice president, Jean-Pierre Bemba, at the ICC in The Hague (The Netherlands). He was charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes while leading his military forces in the Central African Republic in 2002–03; the abuses included murder, rape and pillage, which were alleged to have been 'widespread and systematic'. 2011 Constitutional amendments were adopted in January, when among other amendments, electoral changes were introduced that stopped the presidential run-off process. There were rumours of an attempted coup against the president on 27 February. The ban on mining in the east of the country that had been imposed in 2010 was lifted in March. Oil exploration in DRC's old Virunga national park, which is also a Unesco World Heritage Site and important habitat for mountain gorillas, was suspended following worldwide outcries from environmental groups. A project to refurbish DRC's railway network by 2015 was announced in May. The 3,000km, US\$600 million programme of works is backed by the World Bank and Chinese investors. Railway tracks will be replaced and new rolling stock purchased, while personnel of the existing rail company, who have not

been paid for over four years, will be either retired with a pension or re-employed. Parliamentary and presidential elections took place in November. Of the 11 candidates that took part in the presidential elections, Joseph Kabila won 48.95 per cent of the vote and Etienne Tshisekedi 32.33 per cent; the remainder won less than 8 per cent each. International observers of the elections considered the results 'lacked credibility' with numerous examples of problems with vote counting. Supporters of unsuccessful candidates took to the streets to voice their complaints. The UNC announced it would challenge the presidential election result in the supreme court. Joseph Kabila was sworn into office on 20 December. Parliamentary results were not due for publication until 13 January 2012.

2012 On 6 March, Prime Minister Muzito resigned and Louis Koyagiolo was appointed as acting prime minister. Fly Congo announced that from April old and unsafe airplanes it owned and operated were going to be destroyed and new planes bought to replace them. The decision followed the blacklisting in July 2011 by the EU of Hewa Bora Airways, Fly Congo's previous identity, and the bad reputation that Congolese airlines had in general. On 19 April the President promoted finance minister Augustin Ponyo to prime minister. On 28 May, the UN revealed evidence that Rwanda was supporting the March 23 Movement (M23) rebels in the eastern region of DRC through the training of troops in Rwanda and supplying some recruits (a number of which were deemed under-aged) to the insurgency. M23 are largely former members of CNDP who had formed the group in April, following an army mutiny, complaining that they had not been given the army posts they had been promised after the 2009 peace deal). On 2 July, three new, higher denomination, bank notes were issued in a bid to counter the growing trend of 'dollarisation' in the economy – in June 2012, 89 per cent of all financial transactions in DRC were conducted in US dollars. The new notes are Cf1,000 (US\$1.07), Cf5,000 (US\$5.36) and Cf10,000 (US\$10.73). On 10 July, Thomas Lubanga was convicted of war crimes and human rights violations and recruiting and using child soldiers in his militia over 2002–03 (the first ever defendant to be condemned by the ICC) and sentenced to 14 years in jail. On 15 July the AU brokered an agreement between DRC and Rwanda to allow a neutral, international force to patrol their mutual border and tackle the militia forces active in the region. An outbreak of the deadly disease Ebola was reported in north-east DRC on 18 August. Medical authorities

said this strain of the Ebola virus was not the same strain as the Ebola outbreak recorded in neighbouring Uganda in July 2012. On 20 November rebels of the M23 rebels entered the eastern city of Goma. Forces of M23 withdrew from Goma on 1 December, following a regionally negotiated agreement. 2013 A raid by the Allied Democratic Forces (a group of Ugandan rebels based in eastern DRC) on the border town of Kamango on 11 July led to some 30,000 (according to the UNHCR) fleeing. The unexpected move caused consternation in Uganda where there was a shortage of accommodation, food and sanitation for the refugees. On 1 August he conservation group WWF called on UK-based company Soco International to abandon its plans to explore for oil in the Virunga National Park, Africa's oldest national park. After 18 months of intermittent skirmishes in North Kivu, peace talks between the M23 and government restarted in September after pressure from regional leaders. Martin Kobler, UN special envoy to the DRC, reported in October that the M23 was 'all but finished as a military threat' after it abandoned nearly all its military positions in the east and was reduced to a small triangle close to the Rwandan border. Within hours of the government declaring a military victory, the M23 rebel group said it was ending its insurgency and its leader surrendered in Uganda on 7 November.

Political structure **Constitution**

A draft of a new constitution was approved by the national assembly in May 2005, and by a majority (84.31 per cent) of the people in a referendum held in December. It was officially adopted on 18 February 2006. The new constitution increases the number of provinces from 10 to 26, allows greater autonomy for some of the mineral-rich regions and lowers the minimum age for presidents from 35 to 33, thereby allowing 33-year-old Joseph Kabila, who has been president since the death of Laurent Kabila (his father) in 2001, to stand for the presidency in the 2006 elections. The president, who is limited to two five-year terms, names the prime minister from the largest party. The flag is blue, to symbolise peace, crossed by a red line (the blood of the four million people who died in the civil war) and hedged by two yellow lines (the vast mining deposits of the country).

Independence date

30 June 1960

Form of state

Presidential republic

The executive

Under an accord signed in 2002 by the government, rebel groups and the civilian opposition, President Joseph Kabila was expected to remain in office until election in 2004, however elections have been postponed to 2006. The president is assisted by four vice presidents, each representing the government, two armed rebel groups and the civilian opposition.

National legislature

The bicameral parliament consists of the Assemblée Nationale (national assembly; lower chamber) with 500 members, of which 61 are elected in single-seat constituencies and the remainder in multi-seat constituencies from an open list of candidates; the Senat (senate, upper chamber) has 120 members elected by representatives of subordinate assemblies.

Legal system

The civil code is based on the Belgian system, including the structure of the Supreme Court. Legal issues at the local level are usually dealt with according to tribal law.

Last elections

28 November 2011 (presidential and parliamentary); 19 January 2007 (senate)
Results: Presidential: Joseph Kabila won 48.95 per cent of the vote, Etienne Tshisekedi 32.33 per cent, Vital Kamerhe 7.74 per cent, Leon Kengo 4.95 per cent; seven other candidates each won less than 2 per cent. Turnout was 58.81 per cent.

Parliamentary: *interim results scheduled for publication on 13 January 2012*

Senate: the Alliance pour la Majorité Présidentielle (AMP) (Alliance for a presidential majority) won 58 seats (out of 108, of which PPRD won 22), the Union pour la Nation Congolaise (UNC) (Congolese National Party) coalition won 21 (of which MLC won 14, including a seat for Jean Pierre Bemba, its leader).

Next elections

June 2016 (presidential and parliamentary); June 2013 (senate)

Political parties

Ruling party

Caretaker-coalition led by Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (PPRD) (People's Party of Reconstruction and Democracy) with Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (PLU) (United Lumumbist Party) and Union des Démocrates Mobutistes (UDM) (Union of Mobutist Democrats) (elected 2006; re-elected 28 Nov 2011)

Main opposition party

Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC) (Movement for the Liberation of Congo)

Population

74.75 million (2012)*

At the end of 2012 there were some 40,000 Angolan refugees still in DRC. Most have had their refugee status withdrawn, yet are unwilling to return to Angola.

Last census: July 1984: 29,916,800

Population density: 20 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 35 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 3.0 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) 3.4 million (UNHCR 2004)

Ethnic make-up

There are over 200 ethnic groups in DRC. The largest is the Kongo, which predominates in Bandundu province. The Mongo are mainly found in the heavily forested north and north-west. The Luba predominate in the two Kasai provinces and the Shabans and Bemba live mainly in Katanga (formerly Shaba) province. Other large ethnic groups include the Zande, the Bwaka, the Lulua and the Songe. There are a large number of people of Nilotic origin, mainly concentrated in the eastern North Kivu province.

Religions

Some 50 per cent of the population adhere to animist beliefs. The remainder are mostly Christian, of which a majority are Roman Catholic. Muslims make up some 10 per cent of the population, residing mainly in North Kivu province.

Education

Estimates by major non-government organisations show that at least four out of every 10 children of primary school age are denied the basic right to education in the DRC. Several obstacles towards accessing basic education include the inability of parents to pay school fees, massive displacement of population and destruction of school buildings during the civil war. Between 1997 and 2003, millions of children had no access to schools, leading to an increase in the dropout rate from 49 per cent to 75 per cent during the period.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has helped in the rehabilitation of seven schools and four health centres in Kisangani (damaged in 2000), which cater for 20,000 children. Unicef will also provide financial assistance towards training teachers and for various educational materials.

Literacy rate: 72 per cent men and 49 per cent women, adult rates (World Bank).

Compulsory years: Six to 12.

Pupils per teacher: 45 in primary schools.

Health

The Mobutu government had placed a low priority on standards of health and welfare, and continuing civil war inhibited

improvement. From this low base, expenditure has slowly risen from the 1.5 per cent in 2000.

Only one-third of the population, mostly those in the larger cities, have access to local healthcare. There are more than 900 hospitals with a total capacity of over 75,000 beds, but many of these are not operating due to a lack of resources and loss of unpaid staff. There are an estimated 1,900 physicians working in the DRC, for a population of 58 million. Tuberculosis incidence is about 260 per 100,000 population.

Unicef in association with the DRC government started a major measles immunisation campaign in October 2002, targeting some 15 million children initially.

Forty five per cent of the population have access to an improved water sources. There were cases of polio reported to the World Health Organisation – Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 2006; the country had previously been free of the disease and its re-emergence was due to infected travellers.

The border between Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was closed on 6 January 2009 due to an outbreak of Ebola in the Luande Norte province of DRC.

HIV/Aids

One million people were HIV positive in 2003, of which 570,000 were women, plus there were 110,000 children infected and 770,000 orphans (aged 0–17) created. Deaths from Aids amounted to 100,000 in 2003.

An HIV infection rate of 12 per cent has been characteristic for women who were caught up in civil war atrocities, or attacked by exiled Hutu Militia, and been raped. Such militia erroneously believe that raping a woman will be protection from HIV infection.

HIV prevalence: 4.2 per cent aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

Life expectancy: 44 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 5.8 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef); maternal mortality 9.4 per 1,000 (World Bank)

Birth rate/Death rate: 15 deaths to 45 births per 1,000 people (World Bank 2001).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 146 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 34 per cent of children aged under five were malnourished (World Bank 2004).

Head of population per physician: 0.11 physicians per 1,000 people, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Welfare

While several UN agencies and non-governmental organisations, through a diverse range of activities, manage the welfare situation in the DRC, there have been setbacks when humanitarian teams were withdrawn for safety reasons. The western provinces of the country have remained stable, but the eastern provinces, featuring unrivalled poverty and insecurity, are gripped by a humanitarian emergency. Over 3.3 million people are estimated to have been killed or died as a result of the war, to overthrow the DRC government, which started in 1998. The UN estimates that there are 3.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that 16 million people (including refugees from Angola), are in need of emergency food aid, or have been cut off from traditional means of subsistence. In early 2004, two million people benefited from WFP's programmes, at a total cost of US\$196 million.

The UN reported that during 2002–03, there were 'unprecedented levels of violence by armed factions in eastern DRC, including cannibalism, systematic killings, rape and lootings,' despite some political stability following the installation of a government of transition in mid-2003. While there are no precise rape figures, records show over 40,000 cases were reported since the civil war of 1998 began, and exiled Hutu militia (from Rwanda) began attacking villagers in eastern DRC.

Main cities

Kinshasa (capital, estimated population 9.5 million (m) in 2012), Lubumbashi (1.8m), Mbuji-Mayi (1.7m), Kananga (1.1m), Kinsangani (535,977), Bukavu (806,940), Tshikapa (587,548), Kolwezi (453,147).

Languages spoken

Among the many African languages spoken, Lingala, KiSwahili, Tshiluba and Kikongo are the most prominent in DRC.

Official language/s

French

Media

Press

Dailies: There are several dailies, all published in French, the majority of which are located in Kinshasa, including *La Potentiel* (www.lepotentiel.com), the independent, *La Référence Plus* (<http://groupelereference.afrikart.net>), *L'Avenir* (www.groupeleavenir.net), *L'Observateur* (www.lobservateur.cd), *La Conscience* (www.laconscience.com), *La Phare* (www.lepharercd.com), *La Prospérité* (www.laprosperteonline.net),

and *La République* (www.la-republique.com).

Weeklies: In French, *Le Soft* (www.lesoftonline.net), covers political matters.

Periodicals: In French, *Observatoire de l'Afrique Centrale* (www.obsac.com), a quarterly magazine with reviews of the news in Central Africa and the bi-monthly *C Retro Actuel* (<http://c-retro-actuel.net>), covering current affairs, politics, the economy and culture.

Broadcasting

The national, public broadcaster is Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise (RTNC).

Radio: Radio services are the main medium of mass communication and sources of news and information.

RTNC operates *La Voix du Congo* (The Voice of Congo), which broadcasts programmes in French, Swahili, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kikongo. Private radio stations include the UN-backed Radio Okapi (www.radiookapi.net), Top Congo FM (www.topcongo.com) and Mangembo FM (www.mangembo-fm.com). There are also several stations broadcasting religious content. International transmissions from Radio France International (RFI) (www.rfi.fr) and the BBC World Service (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice) (92.7 FM) are available through satellite and internet or relayed via local radio stations. There are many more private radio stations broadcasting in small localities throughout the country.

Television: Television coverage is almost nationwide, with four channels available including the government-owned RTNC. Commercial stations include RTGA (www.groupe.lavenir.net), Canal Tropical TV and Raga TV. There are many more private TV stations broadcasting in small localities throughout the country.

National news agency: ACP (Agence Congolaise de Presse)

Economy

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has much potential, with huge mineral wealth of cobalt, copper, gold, diamonds and uranium, its rivers with abundant hydroelectric potential, fertile farmland and its virgin forests. It experienced exploitation during colonial times and civil war, and mismanagement during corrupt regimes following independence and is slowly beginning to develop its riches for itself, using foreign investment. There are still worrying risks of widespread violence in north-western and eastern provinces, coming from domestic insurgents, Rwandan Hutu militia, and more brutal attacks from the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army. Such attacks cause deaths and maiming and displace communities and disrupt farming and commercial life.

The majority of the population is engaged in subsistence farming; a primary industry that remains the principal component of GDP, at 40.2 per cent in 2008; the service sector was 31.8 per cent and industry 28 per cent, of which manufacturing was 5.5 per cent. Although rich in so many ways, DRC is nevertheless one of the poorest countries in the world with per capita income of US\$171 in 2009. In 2010, the UN Human Development Index (HDI) ranked the DRC as 168 (out of 169 countries) for improvement in health, education and income and indicated that DRC had had a consistently below average improvement rate compared to other sub-Saharan African countries since 1980. The poverty rate was recorded as 59.22 per cent, and 53.7 per cent of households experienced at least three indicators of poverty. The government signed a new Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2010, which provides loans at favourable rates for programmes to alleviate poverty. GDP growth was 6.2 per cent in 2008, which fell to 2.8 per cent in 2009 as the global economic slowdown led to mine closures by multinational mining companies as they scaled back their operations. As a result almost overnight around 300,000 miners in Katanga Province lost their jobs. However, by late 2009 export sales of copper ore, in particular, began to pick up and GDP growth was forecast at 5.5 per cent for 2010. Inflation, which had been 18 per cent in 2008 jumped to 46.2 per cent in 2009, before falling back to an estimated 26.2 per cent in 2010 and forecast to fall further to 13.5 per cent in 2011.

External debt was estimated to be US\$13.7 billion at the end of 2009. In February 2010, the Paris Club of international creditors agreed to reschedule debts of US\$1.7 billion, while cancelling a further US\$1.3 billion. In November 2010, international creditors agreed to cancel US\$7.35 billion in foreign debt, much of it accrued under ex-president Mobutu, and deemed unsustainable. Corruption is a major problem, especially in dealings in natural resources. The government has implemented reforms necessary to restore macroeconomic stability, cut corruption and apply measures of good governance. However, with a country so large (the third largest in Africa, behind Sudan and Algeria) and a world market willing to accept dubious provenance, despite international sanctions, the authorities have a hard task securing the country's assets and borders. Diplomatic tension and militia fighting in the border region with Burundi has isolated the area from total government control and the

smuggling of gold, diamonds and other minerals is rife.

The infrastructure is poor and in need of major investment, either foreign or domestic. DRC could become a powerhouse for Africa, supplying raw materials and surplus energy, if given time to develop a stable civil society.

On 2 July 2012, three new, higher denomination bank notes were issued in a bid to counter the growing trend of 'dollarisation' in the economy – in June 2012, 89 per cent of all financial transactions in DRC were conducted in US dollars. The new notes are Cf1,000 (US\$1.07), Cf5,000 (US\$5.36) and Cf10,000 (US\$10.73).

External trade

The DRC is a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa), although in 2010 it was still not a member of the free trade area, as operated by 13 other member states, nor are there plans to join the customs union. It is also a member of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

DRC was a leading producer of industrial diamonds before its civil war and they remain dominant in the economy, accounting for around 50 per cent of exports. The narrow export base is concentrated mainly on minerals, with some agricultural cash crops. The DRC's balance of trade is therefore susceptible to the vagaries of world commodity markets. Under-investment and regular strikes have further weakened the mining industry.

In April 2009 international donors pledged US\$1 billion to upgrade transport links across eastern and southern Africa, in an initiative to carry goods to market cheaper and faster. Not only will roads and rail links be improved, but also time-consuming official procedures will be streamlined for efficiency.

Imports

Principal imports are foodstuffs, mining and other machinery, transport equipment and fuels.

Main sources: China (17.1 per cent of total in 2011), South Africa (17 per cent), Belgium (9 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are diamonds, copper, palm oil, cobalt, crude oil, rubber, cotton and coffee.

Main destinations: China (48 per cent of total in 2011), Zambia (21.2 per cent), US (9.4 per cent).

Agriculture

Total agricultural land is 226.7 million hectares of which 6.6 per cent is pasture and 3.0 per cent arable; forestry accounts for over 50 per cent. Around 60 per cent

of the workforce is active in subsistence farming.

Despite enormous agricultural potential, the sector has been handicapped by transport problems, occasional drought, smuggling and inflexible pricing policies. Farmers in the eastern provinces have also had to contend with lethal Hutu militia, exiled from Rwanda, who target isolated farms and villages for supplies while often committing atrocities. The government is developing the forestry sector with multilateral financial assistance.

Main food crops are cassava, maize, rice and plantain. Production is insufficient to meet demand, and poor transport restricts supplies to the urban areas. Main cash and export crops are plantation-grown coffee, cocoa, oil palm, rubber, tea, cotton, sugar and tobacco.

Although the DRC has only a narrow coastline, the fisheries sector is evenly based between inland and coastal resources. Around 150,000 artisanal fishermen operate in the DRC, providing 90 per cent of the total national catch. Excluding subsistence production, inland fishing in the many rivers and lakes produces around 150,000 tonnes, comparable with the 160,000 for seafood production. The country is a substantial net importer of seafood and freshwater fish.

DRC has 135.2 million hectares (ha) of tropical forest, roughly half the timber resources of the African continent. The first industrial exploitation started in 1930 at Mayumbe. The sector is vastly under-exploited and holds out much potential, particularly in terms of export revenue. From 1970 onwards, the focus of activity shifted from Mayumbe to the Cuvette region. The DRC produces large quantities of sawnwood, as well as plywood and veneer and tropical hardwood logs and sawnwood are the principal exports. However the principal use of timber is as domestic firewood.

An estimated US\$12 million per annum is being lost through tax avoidance by international logging companies, according to Greenpeace in 2008. On 19 January 2009 almost 60 per cent of all timber contracts were cancelled, following a six-month review of 156 logging contracts, to clamp down on corruption and enforce environmental standards. The World Bank financed the review, which found that only 65 contracts for viable. New contracts, for logging 90,000 square kilometres of rainforest would be let at a later date.

Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector contributes around 17 per cent to GDP and employs around

10 per cent of the workforce. Approximately three-quarters of production is centred around Kinshasa or in Katanga province, owing to the availability of electricity and adequate transport facilities in these areas.

In an environment of political instability, endemic corruption and poor regulation, few manufacturing industries have developed. The few that remain have also been hindered by a lack of technical and management expertise, the comparatively poor transport infrastructure and a chronic decline in domestic purchasing power eroded by inflation and lack of foreign exchange to purchase essential manufacturing inputs.

Output is geared towards the domestic market and is mainly concentrated on brewing, food processing, textiles, consumer goods, construction industry inputs and transport equipment.

Mismanagement and shortages of spare parts and materials have led to cut-backs in production with most firms operating at below half capacity. The government is attempting to increase production by encouraging foreign investment and offering substantial tax incentives.

Tourism

After a long and bloody civil war, DCR has a tourist infrastructure in poor condition, coupled with continued internal disorder in the eastern region, which makes it a destination for business visitors and hardy travellers only. In November 2011, tourist arrivals were boosted by visitors who wished to view the eruption of the Nyamulagira volcano, located in Africa's oldest national park, Virunga, which is one of four national parks and one wildlife reserve included on Unesco's World Heritage List. A new tourist lodge opened in January 2012 in Virunga to cater for the growing numbers to the park.

Tourists also visit to see the endangered lowland gorilla and the rare bonobo chimpanzees and okapi (of the giraffe family). The Bembenga (pygmy) people still live in their dense forest homes.

Travel and tourism contributes around US\$150 million to GDP (around 1 per cent of GDP), it employs less than 2 per cent of the workforce. Capital investment in the tourist industry has increased from US\$40 million in 2006 to an estimated US\$108 million in 2011.

Environment

In February 2008 the governments of DRC, Rwanda and Uganda agreed to joint measures to protect the mountain gorillas found within their shared border regions. Tourists visiting the area to view the endangered great apes raise a combined US\$5 million for the countries concerned. However, poaching and civil strife

have dropped the numbers of gorillas to critically endangered levels, so that a 10-year conservation project which focuses of security and encouraging local people to preserve the animals and habitat is seen as the only hope for the gorilla's survival.

Mining

The country is rich in mineral resources and is potentially one of Africa's richest countries. DRC's copper reserves are estimated at 75 million tonnes with iron at one billion tonnes, 240 million carats of diamonds and over 600 tonnes of gold. In the past, mining contributed around a third of GDP and employed 5 per cent of the workforce. With around half of DRC's foreign exchange earnings gained from diamond exports, the industry watchdog called for stricter application of existing laws to reduce smuggling and exploitative practices that lead to less revenue for DRC than was possible.

Moves towards peace should lead to a resumption of investment in the mining sector, backed by planned new mining and investment codes. Mining is likely to be the driving force of the economy over the medium-term.

Diamonds are mined on a commercial scale by the Société Minière de Bakwanga (Miba) at Bakwanga in Kasai Oriental, but artisanal diggers account for almost three-quarters of total output.

There is tin mining and small-scale mining of cadmium, cassiterite and wolframite.

Activity is concentrated in the copper-rich Katanga (formerly Shaba) province.

Twangiza gold deposits are estimated at 4.1 million tonnes of ore. With the exception of diamonds, these minerals have been hit by weak world demand.

Katanga Province is part of the Central African Copperbelt, which extends from Angola through the DRC into Zambia.

The state-run Gécamines has holdings containing the biggest concentrations of copper and cobalt in the world.

Gécamines' troubles are rooted in long-term problems of corruption and mismanagement. Its misfortune is exacerbated by the civil war, which has led to foreign partners scaling down or pulling out of joint ventures.

Australia's Anvil Mining has production of the Dikulushi copper and silver mine.

In 2006, the Canadian lawyer, Paul Fortin was appointed to run the state-owned mining company Gecamines, which had been plundered and left bankrupt by former president Mobutu Sese Seko, to restore the company to a viable entity and write draft national mining legislation. In October 2009 Mr Fortin resigned, in disappointment at what he saw as widespread fraud preventing million\$ of

dollars of mining revenue from reaching state coffers, as reported in parliament. An ambitious programme of development of DRC's minerals became defunct as the treasury lost US\$450 million in 2008 alone through tax fraud, smuggling and illegal mining. Gold smuggling, in particular, had cost the state an estimated US\$1 billion per year. In March 2011, the ban on mining gold, tin and coltan was lifted in three provinces of eastern DRC. Following successful military action in the area to rout militia operations, the mining ministry dispatched officials to oversee legitimate shipments of ore from the region.

Hydrocarbons

Proven oil reserves totalled 180 million barrels in 2008, most of which are located off the Atlantic coastline and in the Congo River estuary. Oil production was 19,960 barrels per day (bpd) with consumption at around 11,000bpd. There is no domestic refinery and all crude oil must be exported, via the Moanda Oil Terminal.

Total natural gas reserves stood at one billion cubic metres in 2008, most of which is located beneath Lake Kivu, however the cost of exploiting this reserve has made production non-viable.

Coal reserves stood at 88 million tonnes, typical production is 10 million tonnes per annum. Mines are located at Luena and Kalemie.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 2,443MW in 2007; however the DRC has the potential to produce 419,210MW of economically feasible electricity, a figure which is greater than Africa's current total generating capacity, if it were able to harness the power of its rivers. The Inga Dam near the port of Matadi at the mouth of the Congo River produces 1,700MW supplying not only the capital but also the copper mines in Katanga. There are modest plans to invest in further plant which would boost capacity to 3,500MW. Inga provides DRC with its biggest foreign exchange earner. Only 6 per cent of the population have access to the power grid; energy in rural areas is mainly derived from charcoal and wood.

DRC is a member of the Southern African Power Pool (Sapp); set up to provide reliable and economical energy supplies to all members in twelve countries. However, DRC is unable to receive electricity from Namibia due to a lack of high voltage lines in Angola.

In 2008 a forum, hosted by the World Energy Council, to discuss a new hydroelectric scheme at the Inga site, took place in London, between African leaders and international financiers. The plan under

consideration was the building of the world's largest hydroelectric power station. The Grand Inga Project (GIP), estimated to cost some US\$80 billion, producing output of 32,000MW, would have a 205-metre dam with a 15km reservoir and be operational by 2020–25. A new power grid would also be built extending north to Egypt and south to South Africa.

The parastatal utility company Société Nationale d'Electricité (SNEL) is responsible for production, transmission, distribution and sales of electricity, through subsidiary agencies.

Banking and insurance

The banking system is virtually non-existent as persistent hyperinflation has led to the collapse of all the country's banks.

Central bank

Banque du Congo

Main financial centre

Kinshasa

Time

Kinshasa and the western provinces – GMT plus one hour

Elsewhere – GMT plus two hours

Geography

The country is bordered by the Republic of Congo in the west, by the Central African Republic in the north, by Sudan in the north-east, by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi in the northeast to east, by Tanzania in the east to south-east, Zambia in the south and Angola in the south to south-west. Lake Tanganyika forms most of the border with Tanzania.

DRC is the second largest country in Africa (after Sudan), it is over two million square kilometres in area, encompassing a huge central basin of tropical rain forest, with mountains that rise in the east and the continent's second longest river (after the Nile) running through its northern and western regions. It has a tiny 37km coastline where the River Congo drains into the eastern South Atlantic sea-board. In its eastern range of mountains live the endangered mountain gorilla whose habitat is under threat from illegal logging and deforestation. Pic Marguerite on Mont Ngaliema (Mount Stanley) at 5,110 metres is the tallest peak. Close to the city of Goma are Africa's two most active volcanoes, Nyamuragira and Nyiragongo – which has the world's fastest flowing lava. The southern part of the country is savannah grassland.

Most of the population is concentrated in areas with the best communications, near Kinshasa in the far west, along the Congo River and other main rivers, and in the southern and eastern border regions.

Hemisphere

Straddles the equator, although most of the country is situated in the southern hemisphere.

Climate

The climate varies widely owing to the size of the country. The lowlands in the western region are hot and humid, including Kinshasa, where rain is concentrated in the period from November to March and temperatures reach 32 degrees Celsius (C) in the hottest month, January, with 26 degrees C in the coolest month, June. On the central plateau, the likely temperature range is 18–20 degrees C. In the south and the eastern province of Kivu the climate is a Mediterranean type and is slightly cooler, particularly in the winter months.

Dress codes

Business clothes may be casual and lightweight clothing is essential, especially if visiting during the rainy season.

Entry requirements

Visitors are advised to contact embassy representatives in advance to ascertain current entry requirements. Visitors are also advised to register their presence in DRC with their local embassy representative.

Passports

Required by all. All passports must be valid for six months from the date of departure. Proof of return/onward passage is also necessary.

Visa

Required by all. A proposed tourist *univisa* (a single visa to visit all 15-member states of SADC: Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) is expected to be in use by 2013. Visitors should check with the appropriate consulates to confirm start of *univisas* and their scope before beginning a tour of southern Africa.

Applications for a business visa requires a letter from a tour company stating the trip has been paid in full, or from an employer accepting responsibility for any expenses incurred; proof of status and a letter of finance giving proof of sufficient funds and a full itinerary. An official letter of invitation endorsed by the DRC authorities must also accompany the application. Travel regulations should be studied carefully before a visit as restrictions apply.

Prohibited entry

Those with visas/entry/exit stamps for Rwanda, Burundi or Uganda are likely to be refused entry.

Currency advice/regulations

The import or export of local currency is prohibited. Foreign currency import is

limited to US\$10,000 and must be declared. Currency declaration forms must be kept and all currency exchanges should be recorded.

Customs

Visitors are advised not to take in any equipment which may arouse suspicion, such as cameras, binoculars, maps or any kind of tools or military equipment.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever vaccination certificate is required if arriving from an infected area.

Advisable precautions

Visitors should take precautions against all tropical diseases. Vaccinations for diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis A, polio and typhoid are recommended. Other vaccinations that may be recommended are cholera, tuberculosis, hepatitis B and meningitis. There is a risk of rabies. Anti-malaria tablets are essential, and HIV/Aids is widespread among both men and women. Dysentery, typhoid and typhus are prevalent, especially outside Kinshasa. Bubonic plague exists in the Bunia region.

Tap water must be treated as unsafe unless boiled and filtered (bottled water is available in the main cities). Outside Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, eat only hot, cooked food and avoid raw salad, fruit, vegetables and ice cubes. Dairy products are unpasteurised and should be avoided. A first aid kit that includes disposable syringes, is a reasonable precaution. Medical insurance is essential, including emergency evacuation, and an adequate supply of personal medicines is necessary.

Hotels

Several major hotels in Kinshasa and other cities. Most tend to be expensive and are often heavily booked. A service charge is usually added to bill and further tipping is optional.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 4 Jan (Commemoration of the Martyrs of Independence), 17 Jan (National Heroes' Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 17 May (National Liberation Day), 30 Jun (Independence Day), 1 Aug (Parents' Day), 17 Nov (Army Day), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0800–1130.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0730–1200, 1430–1700; Sat: 0730–1200.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0730–1500; Sat: 0730–1200. It is normal practice for ministers and senior officials to work Mon–Fri: 0830–1300 and from 1600–2000.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0800–1200, 1500–1700; Sat: 0800–1200.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

There are 900 and 1800 GSM services operating in highly populated areas.

Electricity supply

220V AC

Social customs/useful tips

With its vast range of ethnic groups and huge land area, there are many different traditions, according to the locality. As in most French-speaking African countries, business etiquette when visiting government and (to a lesser degree) private commercial offices is more formal than in English-speaking Africa. Do not openly criticise the government or attempt to photograph public buildings. Military installations are also best avoided if possible.

Security

The insecurity and lawlessness in eastern and northern DRC makes travelling to these areas dangerous. Visitors should consider whether their journey is vital before travelling in the rest of DRC. Street crime is rife, especially in Kinshasa. Visitors are advised not to wear expensive jewellery or watches or to carry cameras conspicuously. To achieve anything expect to pay *katumulomo* tips, especially to soldiers (both genuine and fake), who are seldom paid and who man the road-blocks. Visitors should beware of unofficial 'porters' at N'djili airport. Those visiting for the first time should try to arrange for a local business associate or friend to meet them at the airport. Visitors are advised to stay in their hotels after dark. They should avoid public transport altogether and use hire cars rather than taxis whenever possible.

The DRC is undergoing profound political change which means that any official efforts which may be made to protect foreign visitors are unlikely to be effective outside Kinshasa. The best advice is to contact embassy representatives in advance in order to check the safety of the region to which you wish to travel.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Hewa Bora Airways
International airport/s: Kinshasa-N'djili International airport (FIH) is 25km from central Kinshasa. As N'djili is located a long way from the city, it is advisable to pre-arrange transport either with a hotel or local car hire firm such as Hertz (office within the shopping gallery at the Inter-Continental Hotel) or to arrange for a business or social contact to meet

first-time visitors to the country at the airport.

Other airport/s: There are almost 60 airports and airfields around DRC.

Airport tax: Departure tax: Cf500

Surface

Road: There are 2,400km of poorly maintained asphalted roads leading to neighbouring countries. However, most borders are closed and the roads leading to them are considered very dangerous.

Rail: The three main lines into DRC are the Voie Nationale running from Matadi port to Kinshasa (366km); the eastern route entering from Tanzania at Kalemie and the northern route entering from the Sudan at Mungbere. There are also links to southern African states via Zambia. An end to Angola's civil war would allow reconstruction of the Benguela line from Shaba to Lobito port in Angola, but this could take several years.

Water: From Kinshasa there is a regular ferry service to Brazzaville, although it is subject to disruption.

Main port/s: The main port is Matadi, about 150km inland on the Congo River. Kinshasa is the main inland river port and the ferry crossing point from Brazzaville.

Getting about

National transport

Air: There are connections from Kinshasa-N'djili to over 40 local destinations. Charter facilities are available.

Road: There are indefinite restrictions on travel throughout the country. A permit from the interior ministry is required for travel outside Kinshasa.

The 240,000km road network is in poor condition outside main population centres and some parts have become impassable through lack of maintenance. Bridges should be checked before crossing and banditry is common.

Buses: Very irregular, crowded and infrequent service.

Rail: A network of over 5,000km is operated by Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Zaïroise (SNCZ), but some parts are inoperable while others subject to disruption. Of the four classes – 'deluxe' and first-class are advisable.

A project to refurbish DRC's railway network by 2015 was announced on 12 May 2011. The 3,000km, US\$600 million programme of works including railway tracks to be replaced and new rolling stock purchased, will be backed by the World Bank and Chinese investors.

Water: Inland navigation is important, particularly for freight on the Congo River between Kinshasa and Kisangani and the Kasai River from Ilebo to the Congo River north of Kinshasa. However, all routes around Kisangani have been disrupted by the civil war. When available, passenger

services run on all major rivers and lakes. It is advisable to travel luxury or first class.

City transport

Shared taxis provide the best form of transport and are widely available. There is little or no public transport outside Kinshasa.

Taxis: Volatile inflation rates and political instability mean it is virtually impossible to keep track of taxi fares in local currency. If resorting to a local taxi, it is absolutely essential to negotiate a fixed fare before starting the journey.

Car hire

Self-drive cars are available in Kinshasa and at the airport. A deposit is required unless an acceptable credit card can be produced. International driving licence required. Traffic drives on the right.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling (IDD) code for DRC is +243, followed by the area code and subscriber's number. In late 2006 the landline telephone system was not functioning. To call a mobile number (beginning with 8 or 9) dial +243 and then the number.

Kinshasa	12	Lubumbashi	2
Cellular network	8		

Chambers of Commerce

Fédération des Entreprises du Congo, 10 Avenue des Aviateurs, PO Box 7247, Kinshasa (tel: 880-7297; fax: 780-0660; e-mail: feccongo@hotmail.com).

Franco-Congolaise Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie, 407 Avenue Roi Baudouin, PO Box 8.211, Kinshasa 1 (tel: 780-5871; fax: 880-7158).

Banking

Banque Commerciale du Congo SARL, BP 2798, Boulevard du 30 Juin, Kinshasa-Gombe (tel: 217-73, 217-76; fax: 221-770).

Banque Continentale Africaine (Zaire) SARL, 4 Avenue de la Justice, Kinshasa-Gombe (tel: 28-006, 28-537; fax: 25-243).

Banque Internationale de Credit SARL, 191 Ave de l'Equateur, Kinshasa-Gombe (tel: 882-0404, 884-1940/5631, 884-3159/3790, 880-1487; fax: 880-1125, 377-97900/34).

Citibank NA Congo, BP 9999, Citibank Building, Coin des Avenues Colonel Lukusa et Ngongo Lutete,

Kinshasa-Gombe 1 (tel: 20555/57; fax: 40015).

Fransabank (Congo) SARL, BP 9497, Avenue du Port, 14/16 Immeuble Zaire-Shell, Kin. 1, Kinshasa-Gombe (tel: 20121/2/3/4; fax: 12-27864).

Nouvelle Banque de Kinshasa, 1 Place du Marché, Kinshasa-Gombe 1 (tel: 12-20562-5, 12-0459-60, 12-3461-63; fax: 12-581-4961 80043).

Stanbic Bank Congo SARL, 12 Avenue de la Mongala, Kinshasa-Gombe (tel: 88-48445, 88-41984, 88-43453, 88-43419, 88-04512; fax: 88-46216).

Union de Banques SARL, BP 197, Coin des Avenues de la Nation et des Aviateurs, Kinshasa-Gombe (tel: 88-4133, 88-43620, 88-44887; fax: 88-46628).

Central bank

Banque Centrale du Congo, 563 Boulevard Colonel Tshashi, PO Box 2697, Kinshasa-Gombe (tel: 20-704; fax: 880-5152; e-mail: cabgouv@bcc.cd).

Travel information

Air Zaire, BP 10120, Airport de N'Djili, Kinshasa (tel: 20-939; fax: 20-940).

N'Djili International Airport, BP 10124, Kinshasa 24 (tel: 23-570).

SNCZ Railways, BP 597, Kinshasa.

Ministry of tourism

Ministry of Tourism, BP12.348, 15 Avenue Papa Iléo (ex des Cliniques), Kinshasa 1 (tel: 34-390, 88-02-394; fax: 88-44-987).

National tourist organisation offices

Office National du Tourisme de la République Démocratique du Congo, BP 9502, Kinshasa-Gombe 1 (tel: 89-32-2238, 815-091-627, 99-31-939; fax: 33-781; e-mail: ont-rdc@raga.net).

Ministries

Civil Service Ministry, Avenue des Ambassadeurs, BP 3, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Agriculture, Boulevard du 30 Juin, Building Sozacom, 3e Etage, BP 8722 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Economy, Industry and Commerce, Boulevard du 30 Juin, Building Onatra, BP 8500 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Energy, 239 Avenue de la Justice, Building SNEL, BP 5137 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 15 Avenue des Cliniques, BP 12348 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Finance, Boulevard du 30 Juin, BP 12998 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Place de

l'Indépendance, BP 7100, Kinshasa-Gombe 14 (tel: 32-450, 30-248, 32-239, 30-996, 32-735, 33-325; fax: 88-02-368; internet site: www.minaffeci-rdcongo.net/).

Ministry of Health, Boulevard du 30 Juin, BP 3088 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Home Affairs, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs, Avenue du 24 Novembre, BP 3171 KIN I, Kinshasa-Kabinda.

Ministry of International Co-Operation, Avenue de la Justice, Enceinte SNEL, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Justice, 228 Avenue des 3 Z, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Mines, 239 Avenue de la Justice, Building SNEL, BP 5137 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of National Education, Enceinte de l'Institut de la Gombe, BP 3163, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Planning and Development, 4155 Avenue des Coteaux, BP 9378 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, 4484 Avenue des Huiles, Building Kilou, BP 800 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Public Works, Building Travaux Publics, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Reconstruction, Boulevard Colonel Tshatshi, Building Travaux Publics, BP 26, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Transport, Boulevard du 30 Juin, Building Onatra, BP 3304, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Ministry of Youth and Sports, 77 Avenue de la Justice, BP 8541 KIN I, Kinshasa-Gombe.

Other useful addresses

Democratic Republic of Congo Embassy (USA), 1800 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20009 (tel: (+1-202) 234-7690; fax: (+1-202) 237-0748).

Democratic Republic of Congo Permanent mission the UN, 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 511, New York (tel: (+1-212) 319-8061; fax: (+1-212) 319-8232; email: drcongo@un.int).

National news agency: ACP (Agence Congolaise de Presse)

44-48 Avenue Tombalbaye, BP 1595, Kinshasa (internet: www.un.int/drcongo).

Internet sites

AllAfrica.com: http://allafrica.com

Africa Online: www.africaonline.com

Democratic Republic of Congo (French only): www.congonline.com