

The Democratic Republic of Congo



COUNTRY: Congo (Zaire)

OFFICIAL NAME: Democratic Republic of Congo (Republique Democratique du Congo)

FORMER NAME: Congo Free State, Belgian Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo Leopoldville, Congo Kinshasa, Zaire (area populated 10,000 years ago; settled by Bantus from present-day Nigeria in 7th and 8th centuries AD; Portuguese explorers [Diego Cao] in 1482;

Henry Morton Stanley later; officially colonized [personal possession of Belgian King Leopold II] as Congo Free State in 1885; Belgian Government administration [renamed the Belgian Congo] took over in 1907; granted independence on 30 June 1960; Parliamentary elections [Patrice Lumumba became Prime Minister and Joseph Kasavubu President], renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1960.)

CAPITAL: Kinshasa

MAIN TOWNS: Kinshasa, Kisangani, Lubumbashi

SUBDIVISIONS: 10 provinces: Bandundu, Bas-Congo, Equateur, Kasai-Occidental, Kasai-Oriental, Katanga, Maniema, Nord-Kivu, Orientale, Sud-Kivu. 1 city: Kinshasa.

INDEPENDENCE: 30 June 1960 (from Belgium)

NATIONAL HOLIDAY: Independence Day, 30 June.

ETHNIC GROUPS: More than 200 groups the majority are Bantu. 4 largest are Luba, Kongo, Mongo (Bantu), & the Mangbetu-Azande (Hamitic). Others include the Bwaka, Kwangu-Kwilu, Lunda, Tshokwe, Lulua, Ngala, Songe & Zande.

LANGUAGES: French (official), Lingala (a trade lingua franca), Kingwana (a Swahili dialect), Kikongo, Tshiluba

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 20%, Kimbanguist 10%, Muslim 10%, other sects and Traditional beliefs 10%

Note: 'Kivu has deposits of precious minerals used in leading-edge industries (electronics, aeronautics, nuclear medicine). These include niobium (15% of the world's reserves are to be found in Africa, 80% of these in the Congo) and tantalum, associated with columbium and known locally as 'coltan' (Africa has 80% of the world reserves, of which 80% in the Congo).' ('Carve-up in the Congo' by Colette Braeckman, Le Monde diplomatique, Oct. 1999) 'The Congo's Centre for the Evaluation of Precious Stones reported the export of 27.1 million carats valued at US\$642.74 million, in 2003.' ('DRC: Thousands of illegal diamond miners expelled', IRIN, 30 Jan. 2004.)

Natural Resources and Areas of Conflict in the D.R. Congo



OIL AND NATURAL GAS: Oil production: 24,000 bbl/day (2001 est.) consumption: 14,000 bbl/day (2001 est.) proved reserves: 1.538 billion bbl (January 2002 est.) Natural gas - proved reserves: 104.8 billion cu m (January 2002 est.)

Pipelines: petroleum products 390 km

ECONOMIC AID RECEIVED: US\$195.3 million (1995)

DEBT: US\$10bn (1994), US\$13bn (1998 est.), US\$12.9 billion (2000 est.)

MAJOR IMPORTS: foodstuffs, mining and other machinery, transport equipment, fuels

IMPORTS FROM: South Africa 18.2%, Belgium 16.4%, Nigeria 11.8%, France 5.9%, Kenya, China (2000)

MAJOR EXPORTS: diamonds, copper, crude oil, coffee, cobalt

EXPORTS TO: Belgium 59.7%, United States 12.9%, Zimbabwe 7.4%, France 6.9%, South Africa, Finland, Italy (2000)