

THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Political Overview:

On August 15, 1960, the Republic of the Congo gained its independence from France and established diplomatic relations with the United States. The Republic of Congo has maintained strong political and economic ties with France and the United States. During the course of the country's political evolution, the Republic of Congo has transitioned from colonialism, to a Marxist system and then to a multiparty democracy in the early 1990's despite a short civil war in 1997.

President Denis Sassou, was elected under a new constitution in 2002, was re-elected in 2009. In 2016, President Denis Sassou Nguesso was re-elected for a third term. President Sassou launched the 2016-2021 social project entitled "*the March Towards Development,*" and the "*Living together*" initiative which calls for unity, dialogue and national cohesion. The Congolese government continues to partner with the United States of America, Congolese civil society and private sector leaders as well as international partners to improve human rights, to build a more stable, secure, democratic, and prosperous Congo. The two countries have worked together on issues of common interest such as strengthening regional security, improving the lives of Congolese citizens, and safeguarding the environment.

Geographical Overview:

The Republic of Congo is in Central Africa, along the Equator in the Congo Basin, which is the second largest tropical forests area in the world after the Amazon. It is bordered by the Central African Republic and Cameroon (to the North), Gabon (to the West), Angola (to the South) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (to the East). The Congo basin rainforests are vital to human life because they shelter a lot of species of fauna and flora and play a key role in global climate stability. Almost 60% of the country's land surface of 132,047 square miles is covered by the forests.

The Republic of Congo is highly urbanized with more than half its population living in the two largest cities, Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. The rest of the country ranks among the least dense areas in Africa, with a population density of 12.8 per square kilometer. The country is largely covered by tropical forests and has abundant unused arable land equivalent to about one third of its total area. Most importantly, it

is endowed with significant hydrocarbon reserves with estimated proven 1.6 billion barrels of oil



reserves and 90 billion cubic meters of natural gas. In addition, the country benefits from significant mining resources such as Iron Ore, Gold and some diamonds.

Economic Overview:

The Republic of the Congo is a member of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). The United States ratified a Bilateral Investment Treaty with the Republic of the Congo in 1994 concerning the reciprocal encouragement and protection of investment. The Republic of the Congo is eligible for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Pointe-Noire is the economic capital of the country. The economy is based primarily on its petroleum sector. The deep-water port in the economic capital is International Ship and Port Facility Security-certified, making it eligible to receive and send shipments directly with the United States. The country's top export to the United States is oil, while imports from the United States include machinery, poultry, optical and medical instruments, and vehicles. The government is focused on developing and implementing structural reforms to diversify the economy and boost private sector's potentials by actively working with the Congolese private sector and the international community to revive industries and construction activities that are key to fostering economic growth.