

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of the Congo
CAPITAL: Brazzaville
SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Multiparty Republic
AREA: 341,945 Sq Km (132,026 Sq Mi)
ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 3,328,000



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Congo is located in West Central Africa. It is bound by Gabon to the west, Cameroon to the northwest, Central African Republic to the north, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire) to the south and east as well as Angola and the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest. The country can be divided into four topographical zones, (1.) the coastal plain which is a treeless plain with swamps, lakes and rivers that extends along the Atlantic coast and inland to the foothills of the Mayombe Mountains. (2.) The fertile Niari Valley in the south central area which contains the country's best soil. (3.) The central highlands or Bateke Plateau which separates the basins of the Ogoove and Niari Rivers and is covered by dense forests. (4.) The Zaire River Basin in the north which is composed of impassable flood plains in the lower areas and a dry savannah in the upper areas. Much of the Congo is covered by dense grasslands, mangroves and forests. Major Cities (pop. est.); Brazzaville 937,600, Pointe-Noire 576,200, Loubomo 83,600, Nkayi 42,500 (1992). Land Use; forested 62%, pastures 29%, agricultural-cultivated 1%, other 8% (1993).

CLIMATE: The Congo has a tropical climate characterised by high temperatures with humidity around 80% and little seasonal variation. The wet season is between April and late October while the dry season is from November to March. Violent winds and squalls are also common in the wet season. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,250 to 1,750 mm (49 to 69 inches) while it is heaviest in the north and decreases towards the Atlantic Coast in the south. Average temperature ranges in Brazzaville are from 17 to 28 degrees Celsius (63 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit) in July to 23 to 33 degrees Celsius (72 to 91 degrees Fahrenheit) in April.

PEOPLE: The population is composed of Bantu tribes except for some isolated groups of Negrillos and Sudanese immigrants. Of the 15 main ethnic groups which are divided into 75 tribes, the Kongo account for 52% of the population while the Teke account for 17%, the Mboshi for 11.5% and the Mbete for 5%. There are also a number of Europeans mainly French.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 7 persons per sq km (18 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 51.9% urban, 48.1% rural (1984). Sex Distribution; 48.6% male, 51.4% female (1988). Life Expectancy at Birth; 50.1 years male, 55.3 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 45% under 15, 27% 15 to 29, 13% 30 to 44, 9% 45 to 59, 5% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and

over (1988). Birth Rate; 46.1 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 14.6 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 31.5 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 73.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians which account for around 93% of the population, of which 54% are Roman Catholic, 25% are Protestant and 14% are African Christian. Around 5% of the population follow local native tribal beliefs and the remainder are Muslims.

LANGUAGES: The official language is French which is used for trade and official purposes. Every ethnic group has its own tribal language with the most widely spoken, Kongo and Teke.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: N/A. Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 56.6% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In 1958 Congo gained internal self government and in 1960 Congo became independent with Fulbert Youlou as President, however, he was forced to resign in Aug. 1960 after moves to create a single party state faced growing opposition and a general strike. Alphonse Massamba-Debat then became President and in 1964 the communist inspired ruling party was established as the sole party. The government then nationalized industries and recognized communist governments such as China, North Korea and North Vietnam. In 1968 military officers led by Maj. Marien Ngoumbi removed Debat from office and set up an interim government. In 1970 a new constitution was adopted which established a single party state and a people's republic. Opposition to single party rule resulted in the assassination of Ngoumbi in 1977 and an 11 member Military Council took control of the government. They declared Martial Law and nominated Joachim Yhombi-Opango as the new President. In Feb. 1979 Opango resigned and Col. Dennis Sassou-Nguessou became President. Later that year a socialist constitution was adopted. In 1984 Nguessou was reelected and in Nov. 1985 student rioting resulted in the death of three students. In 1987 some 20 army officers from the north were charged with undermining the state security and Opango also surrendered to security forces after being implicated. In July 1990 several prominent politicians and journalists were arrested and charged with plotting a coup. In Jan 1991 Pres. Nguessou was forced to appoint a Prime Minister and Marxism was renounced by the Congress while opposition parties were legalized. In June 1991 after the conclusion of the National Conference a new constitution was drafted and Andre Milongo was appointed Prime Minister of a transitional government until scheduled elections in 1992.. During 1991 Cuban troops were withdrawn from Congo after a 14 year presence while diplomatic relations with Israel were restored. In Jan. 1992 there was a failed coup attempt while on Jan. 20, 1992 troops fired on demonstrators demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Milongo. On Mar. 15, 1992 a referendum resulted in the approval of the new constitution with legislative elections held in June and July 1992. In Aug. 1992 Pascal

Lissouba of the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (UPADS) won presidential elections with Stephane Maurice Bongho-Nourra forming a new government in Sept. 1992. On Oct. 31, 1992 Bongho-Nourra's government lost a vote of no confidence with President Lissouba calling for new elections, which resulted in widespread demonstrations. On Dec. 6, 1992 Claude Antoine Dacosta was appointed as head of a government of "national union". On May 2, 1993 the UPADS won further legislative elections while violence erupted following runoff elections in June 1993. In protest to Pres. Lissouba's appointment of former military rule Jacques Yhombi-Opango as prime minister, the opposition leader Bernard Kolelas established a rival government that led to further violence and some 20 deaths in July 1993. On July 16, 1993 Pres. Lissouba dismissed army chief Gen. Jean-Marie Mokoko over fears of a possible military coup, which resulted in a series of armed militia attacks on civilians and the imposition of a state of emergency. On July 29, 1993 government and opposition representatives meet in Gabon and agreed to uphold the May election results and hold a fresh runoff. Ethnic violence continued throughout the year with some 60 deaths occurring in Dec. 1993.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the CFA Franc (Communaute Financiere Africaine-CFAF) divided into 100 Centimes.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$2,307,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$4,097,000,000 (1993). Imports; CFAF 262,100,000,000 (1994). Exports; CFAF 534,800,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$2,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; CFAF 272,700,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 886,000 or 37.4% of total population (1992). Unemployed; 2.3% (1984).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA, France, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Spain and Japan.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Bananas, Cassava, Cocoa, Coffee, Copper, Crude Oil, Ground Nuts, Gold, Lead, Natural Gas, Palm Oil, Phosphates, Potash, Rice, Sugar Cane, Sweet Potatoes, Timber, Uranium, Zinc.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Brewing, Cement, Chemicals, Crude Oil Production and Refining, Food Processing, Forestry, Mining, Soap Manufacture, Sugar Refining, Textiles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Cocoa, Coffee, Crude Oil, Diamonds, Timber and Timber Products.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 1,152 km (716 mi) (1988), passenger-km 419,000,000 (260,354,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 477,000,000 (326,697,000 short ton-mi) (1988). Roads; length 11,000 km (6,835 mi) (1985). Vehicles; cars 26,000 (1989), trucks and

buses 20,000 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 22 (1990), deadweight tonnage 10,840 (1990). Air Transport; N/A.

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 6 with a total circulation of 19,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 240,000 (1994). Television; receivers 8,500 (1994). Telephones; units 19,200 (1993).

MILITARY: 10,000 (1995) total active duty personnel with 80.0% army, 8.0% navy and 12.0% air force while military expenditure accounts for 5.8% (1992) of the Gross National Product (GNP).