

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



After years of turmoil, a promising future

By TIM CASHION

For observers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo there is rarely good news. Headlines always seem to indicate the country is aflame with violent conflict, fueled by ruthless parties who see the DRC as a place to grab what you can and make a fortune in the process.

But that is all changing. A fragile peace is taking hold in the troubled Eastern Congo, where the conflict has been centered, and the DRC has turned in a tremendous string of growing gross domestic product (GDP) figures for the past few years.

In its country overview, the World Bank says: "With 80 million hectares of arable land and over 1,100 minerals and precious metals identified, the DRC has the potential to become one of the richest countries on the African continent and a driver of African growth."

The Bank goes on to say: "After an economic slump in 2009 that brought the growth rate down to 2.8 percent due to the global financial crisis, the DRC posted an annual average economic growth rate of 7.7 percent during the 2010-2014 period, and of 7.7 percent, in 2015, both of which are well above the average in Sub-Saharan Africa."

Looking ahead, the World Bank says that, "The economy is expected to continue to grow at an estimated rate of around 8 percent, owing to increased investment and growth in the extractive industries and the contributions of public works and the tertiary sector."

Other sources put the GDP growth rate at 8.4 percent and 9.0 percent for 2015.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) figure

of 8.4 percent growth for 2015 makes the DRC the eighth fastest-growing economy in the world that year.

The World Bank's assessment of DRC's potential echoes a common view. Indeed, the potential is there for all to see: vast natural resources waiting to be exploited. The country clearly has all the natural

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World Bank Country Overview

ingredients for prosperity. It just needs good management to realize its potential.

If you take a look at the map, you see that the DRC is virtually in the center of Africa, stretching from the Atlantic in the west all the way east to the Great Lakes Region of East Africa, bordering Lake Albert, Lake Edward, Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika.

Its neighbors, going in a clockwise direction from the east, are: Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia and Angola. These countries together represent a potential market of 262 million people.

With Sudan now divided into two countries,



PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS, DRC

DRC President Joseph Kabila inaugurates the Avenue des Poids Lours, one of several infrastructure upgrades underway.

Algeria has become the largest African country by area, and the DRC, at 905,600 square miles, has moved up to second place. But in terms of natural wealth, the DRC is unmatched in Africa.

Half of the forestland of Africa is in the DRC — including the second largest rainforest in the world — and there are 80 million hectares (20 million acres) of agricultural land. The country is

crisscrossed by major rivers, including the biggest by volume in Africa, the mighty Congo.

Already almost all of the DRC's electricity is generated by hydropower plants, and there is potential to electrify all of Africa from expanded hydropower capacity in the DRC.

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A growing economy has improved quality of life



PHOTO: GOVERNMENT OF DRC

DRC Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon.

By VICTOR OLEMBO

The following is a recent interview with Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He served as Minister of Finance from February 2010 to April 18, 2012, when he was appointed Prime Minister by Congolese President Joseph Kabila. Prime Minister Matata Ponyo Mapon has degrees in economics from the Universities of Lubumbashi and Kinshasa, and specializations in international economics and monetary issues. During his tenure as Minister of Finance and Prime Minister, the economy of the DRC has recorded impressive growth and Prime Minister Matata Ponyo Mapon is known as rigorous, disciplined and hardworking with

a focus on good governance. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Victor Olembo: Gross domestic product in the DRC has grown at an average rate of more than 7 percent over the last several years. What has been the impact of this growth on quality of life?

Prime Minister Matata Ponyo: Our country started growing again in 2002. It now has been 14 years since growth has been maintained and confirmed at an average rate of 6.5 percent. Since 2010, the pace of growth averaged 8.03 percent, and for three years (2012-2014), growth was higher than 8.4 percent.

In 2014, with a GDP growth rate of 9.5 percent, the DRC took third place on the list of the most

dynamic countries in the world according to the IMF (International Monetary Fund). This growth is not only macroeconomic; it affects the social side in many ways.

Since 2001, the purchasing power of the Congolese people has increased and international statistics prove it. First of all, the 2014 national report on human development indicated that the national poverty threshold fell from 71 percent of the population in 2007 to 63 percent in 2012. This falling trend continues. We are waiting for the 2015 QUIBB Survey to confirm that the situation has improved and that the DRC poverty threshold fell below 60 percent in 2015.

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DRC's national parks: Beautiful, rich with biodiversity

By PAT SINCLAIR

The splendor of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's natural resources can be experienced first-hand in its many national parks, wildlife refuges and endangered-species sanctuaries, including two of the largest national parks in the entire African continent.

According to the United Nations' Office for Project Services, "The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the most important countries in the world in terms of biodiversity." What makes them special is the multitude of wildlife they support, the variety of their landscapes and most of all, the pride of the local people who want to protect their homeland.

At three of the DRC's national parks, efforts to boost security and add infrastructure are being accomplished in collaboration with local communities, state governments and international aid groups, in order to help save what the world cannot afford to lose.

Support for Salonga

Conservation efforts in the DRC received a boost at the end of May when the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) signed an agreement with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to co-manage Salonga National Park, as reported on the WWF website.

Situated in the heart of the central basin of the Congo River in the center of the country, Salonga is Africa's largest forest park, as well as the second largest tropical forest park in the world (after Tumucumaque National Park in northern Brazil).

According to the WWF, Salonga is made up of



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Hundreds of endangered gorillas live in Virunga National Park.

two vast blocks of protected forests. Totalling more than 36,000 square kilometers (13,899 square miles), it is four times the size of Yellowstone National Park. It supports a huge variety of threatened and endangered wildlife and birds, including forest elephants; Congo peacocks; giant pangolins (a burrowing mammal that resembles a scaly anteater); and bongos, one of the largest of the African forest antelopes.

Salonga also represents the largest expanse of legally protected habitat for the bonobo or pygmy

chimpanzee in the DRC, according to the Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative — approximately 15,000 of the endangered apes or possibly 40 percent of the world's bonobo population live in its protected lands.

"Wild bonobos are uniquely found in DRC, south of the Congo River," states the WWF. "They share 98.7 percent of their genetic code with humans, making them, along with chimpanzees, our closest living relatives."

Yet Salonga also is on the list of World Heritage

Sites in danger, due to decades of poaching and civil unrest that has decimated wildlife and local people alike.

"The co-management agreement we now have with ICCN will breathe new life into this emblematic park," said Jean Claude Muhindo, WWF's DRC director, who was quoted in the May 30 article on WWF's website after speaking at the ceremony at the park headquarters in Monkoto when the collaborative agreement was signed. "We will work closely with our partners and local communities alike to stave off the large array of threats to Salonga."

According to the article, expanded recruitment and training of park rangers are among the plans to stabilize and improve park management and protection. Although nearly 300 eco-guards are employed at the six ranger stations, it's not enough in an area this vast.

Another goal is to improve engagement with neighboring communities in conservation work and in sustainable alternatives to bushmeat hunting and fishing. Finally, it is crucial to secure the vital ecological corridors between the park's two blocks.

Funds for Salonga and the surrounding areas are coming in from USAID, the European Union and German Cooperation KfW, with the hope of creating the Salonga Foundation that can provide ongoing financial security and protection.

"This new management approach is the last chance to upgrade communities around the park to 21st century living standards, and this will only be possible if Salonga has something to protect, meaning elephants and all its other emblematic species," Mr. Muhindo added. "Therefore, these species must be treated with the utmost respect because the

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A grand plan to electrify Congo and Africa

By **TIM CASHION**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has tremendous hydropower potential. It has been estimated that it could produce 100,000 MW of electricity, enough to meet all the current needs of Africa.

This does not sound unreasonable when you consider that one single, multiphase project now on the drawing boards, which has been studied for several years, could deliver a total of some 50,000 MW.

The project is called Grand Inga. It builds on an earlier project that saw, in the 1970s, the construction of two dams on the Congo River at a point called the Inga Falls.

The earlier plants are now aging, with lost efficiency, but were built to produce a total of 1,775 MW (Inga I producing 351 MW and Inga II producing 1,424 MW).

Grand Inga envisions a massive expansion of hydroelectric generating capacity, reaching a total output of close to 50,000 MW, with transmission lines carrying electricity as far as South Africa.

The new scheme includes construction in seven stages of two new dams at Inga Falls: Inga III and Grand Inga. (See map)

The first stage is construction of Inga III, the third dam at this point on the Congo, which is projected to cost \$12 billion.

Inga III will produce 4,800 MW, of which 2,500 MW will be purchased by South Africa, and 1,300 MW will be sold to mining companies, primarily in Katanga Province. Currently the extraction industry is facing an estimated shortfall of some 450 MW, and growth in the sector will only increase demand.

The remaining 1,000 MW will be sold to the national utility SNEL, which in turn will sell it to households and small businesses in greater Kinshasa. It is estimated that the capital city will need this additional supply to meet its needs by 2025.

In May 2013, South Africa and the DRC entered into a treaty whereby the two countries agreed to build Inga III jointly. The DRC ratified the treaty in 2014.

Like many countries in Africa, South Africa has recently experienced chronic power shortages, and Inga III is seen by Pretoria as one of the best options for addressing this serious domestic shortage.



PHOTO: ALAINDE/CC-BY-SA-3.0

A view of the Inga I dam, in the foreground is the Inga II canal.

The lead contractor for Inga III is to be chosen this August. The two groups contending for the first phase are China Three Gorges Corp. in partnership with Sinohydro Corp., and Madrid-based Actividades de Construcción y Servicios SA with Spain's Eurofinsa SA.

The third bidder, Posco and Daewoo Corp. of South Korea, in partnership with Canada's SNC-Lavalin Group Inc., withdrew its interest in March.

Once Inga III is complete, the DRC will turn to building the Grand Inga Dam itself.

This dam will be 673 feet wide and create a reservoir that will be 10 miles long. It will be the largest hydropower project in the world, generating twice the output of China's Three Gorges Dam. This will mean that Inga hydro plants will produce more than a third of all the power generated in Africa.

The Grand Inga project (including Inga III) is estimated to cost \$80 billion to \$100 billion. Among interested parties to lead in funding the project are

the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the European Investment Bank.

On March 14, 2014, the executive directors of the World Bank Group approved a \$73.1 million grant to the DRC for the Grand Inga project (including Inga III). This came after the African Development Bank granted the DRC \$33.4 million the year before.

These funds are earmarked for feasibility and environmental impact studies, as well as for training of personnel and the creation of an administrative body to manage Inga III.

The World Bank's plan is to help the DRC finance the project with a combination of private and public funding in a Private-Public Partnership (PPP).

In March 2015, the World Bank announced that work on Inga III would not begin until 2017. The DRC's agreement with South Africa includes provision of power from Inga III by 2020, a date that is looking difficult to make and is putting pressure on

Kinshasa to get the construction moving.

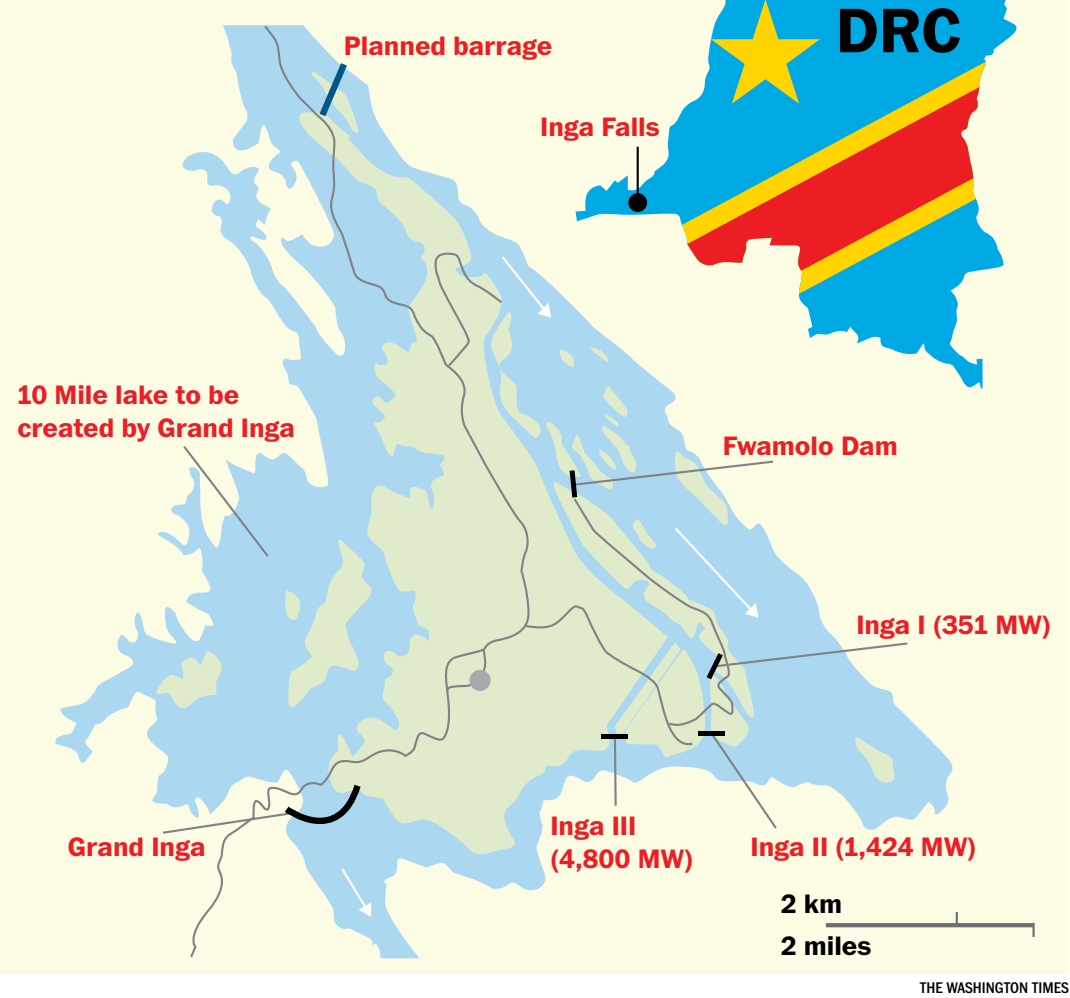
The Grand Inga project enjoys strong political support across much of Africa. Among leading advocates are NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development), SADC (the Southern African Development Community) and EAPP (the East African Power Pool).

The new Inga dams will help alleviate shortages of electricity in the industrial sector, but the broader national needs for electricity by Congo's economy will require a great deal more generating capacity than Inga III.

Currently only 9 percent of the population has electricity, and with anticipated expansion of the economy, both personal and commercial consumption will rise significantly.

And since hydropower is perhaps the most ecologically friendly and best suited to Congo (and Africa as a whole) with its many large rivers, more hydroelectric schemes can be expected in future.

Grand Inga Project



The mighty Congo: River of life and power



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Kisangani, DRC: Giant logs are loaded on a boat to be transported down the Congo River.

The Congo River runs 2,920 miles through the center of Africa, most of its massive flow winding through the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It crosses the equator twice before eventually spilling into the Atlantic Ocean, where it creates a huge plume of silt and organic material.

It is the deepest river on earth (up to 720 feet) and its discharge (1,400,000 cubic feet per second on average and over 1,800,000 cubic feet a second in the rainy season) is second only to that of the Amazon. Only the Nile River is longer in Africa.

The Congo basin, which includes nine countries, covers 13 percent of the African continent, and scientists estimate that its hydropower potential is 13 percent of the total for all rivers in the world. That is enough to meet all the electricity needs of sub-Saharan Africa.

The Congo basin already has 40 hydropower plants. However, the greatest hydropower

potential is near the river's terminus, due to an unusual feature of the river which uniquely has major falls and rapids near its mouth (the falls end 100 miles from the point where the Congo River meets the Atlantic Ocean).

At the 2.5 miles wide Inga Falls, which are part of the larger Livingstone Falls system, the Congo drops 315 feet over 10 miles through a series of falls and rapids. Although not strictly a single waterfall, the Inga Falls network is counted the largest waterfall by volume in the world.

Conveniently, the Inga Falls, home to the Inga hydroelectric plants, are just 120 miles from the capital Kinshasa.

The great river is a major supplier of food, in the form of fish that provide a main food source to many people up and down the length of the river. It is also a key piece in DRC's transport network, with much of the river above Livingstone Falls to Kisangani navigable.

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In addition, net per capita GDP has increased since the start of the decade and all the structural reforms in progress have had a positive impact on the daily life of the population, especially on the low-income group. Our macroeconomic performance over the last few years has made it possible to finance priority expenditures whose effects are currently tangible. And, following the instructions of Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Republic, the social part was at the center of the government's concerns.

In this respect, the government launched several projects aimed at improving the lives and social conditions of the population. These activities are reinforced each year and new activities are added. Several sectors are targeted.

In education, more than 700 schools have been rebuilt or rehabilitated, and more than 2 million school age children reenrolled thanks to anti-poverty policies, such as free primary education.

In the health sector, more than 1,000 health centers and 166 referral hospitals are being built or are under rehabilitation, along with supplying essential medicines to the health system.

In transportation, we have relaunched railway activities and rehabilitated SNCC and SCTP (formerly Onatra), along with creating vital public transportation companies TRANSCO and Congo

Airways, and reopening the Kokolo boat, which has 422-passenger capacity and 1,500 tons of cargo capacity.

In agriculture, work has started on the agro-industrial park of Bukanga Lonzo. All these activities have resulted in the creation of thousands of permanent jobs.

Olembo: What are the elements necessary to permanently maintain this growth?

Prime Minister Matata Ponyo: Faced with the ongoing risk of a slowing global economy, and despite the drop in prices of mining products and oil, consolidating the stability of the macroeconomic framework must continue through ambitious, but prudent, public policy.

We must also prioritize reforms, especially improving the performance of public enterprises so that they contribute considerably to the country's growth. The government has also been involved in diversifying the national economy in order to diminish shocks from a dominant mining sector and to reinforce its resilience.

All this is not possible if national security is not guaranteed. This is the reason why we reinforce security in the country by putting a final end to the wars which frequently destabilize the institutions of the Republic and delay the country's development efforts.

Olembo: the African diaspora is increasingly growing in the West. What mechanisms are being considered by the Government to establish a dialogue?

Prime Minister Matata Ponyo: The Head of

State, President Joseph Kabila is willing to involve all the daughters and sons of the Congolese nation in the development of the country. The government organized a Government-Diaspora Round Table, October 23-24, 2013, in Brussels. It gathered more than 200 delegates from 27 countries spread over five continents.

The objective was to implement an optimal strategy to involve our compatriots living abroad — regardless of ideological trends — in the DRC development process. This meeting opened the beginning of a fruitful and honest cooperation on some common resolutions.

The resolutions resulted in the implementation of a three-party follow-up committee, Government-Diaspora-Partners, a structure which allows a dialogue between us. In addition, another structure for the diaspora was created to reinforce contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A second round

table is planned to take place in Kinshasa.

Olembo: Can the DRC rely as well on its migrants?

Prime Minister Matata Ponyo: Of course! Many emerging countries draw energy in human capital from their diaspora, which helps boost development. The DRC counts on this as well.

Since the 1990s, the DRC has benefited considerably from the material and financial assistance of the diaspora.

The government, in cooperation with the World Bank, invites Congolese from abroad to participate in common activities, to share in the investment risks and to create wealth, especially, by subscribing to the "Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development."

Victor Olembo is managing editor of *Onesha Afrika* magazine.



UN PHOTO/AMANDA VOISARD

Joseph Kabila (right), President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, during the fourth meeting of the regional oversight mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region on Sept. 22, 2014 at the United Nations in New York City.

A fragile peace raises hope for Eastern Congo

By TIM CASHION

There are signs of hope in Eastern Congo. This resource-rich region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has finally seen the fighting and mayhem recede and a fragile peace take hold.

There are still dozens of militia groups in the area, some supported or opposed by neighbors Rwanda and Uganda, but cooperation between the DRC army and the United Nations peacekeeping force, MONUSCO, has gone a long way to pacifying the area.

With growing stability and security in the region, Kinshasa can begin to restore its full authority and look to developing this part of the country. Its mineral riches, which have been a major objective for warring parties, can now be exploited in an orderly way under the control of Kinshasa.

In addition, the DRC's spectacular wildlife, which has suffered from a lack of protection in the Virunga National Park and elsewhere, can now be managed properly, eventually opening up great possibilities for tourism.

The DRC's relations with the rest of Africa and the world have largely been dominated by issues

The DRC's relations with the rest of Africa and the world have largely been dominated by issues related to the conflict in Eastern Congo, and the arrival of peace will enable Kinshasa to refocus its international agenda.

exiles formed an armed group of their own, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), which has been a major cause for fighting ever since.

Rwanda, joined by Uganda, sent troops into the DRC to attack the FDLR and other Hutu elements. They soon turned on Kinshasa itself, and, putting their troops under the command of Congolese Laurent Kabila, marched all the way to the DRC capital, where they took power from then-President Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997.

In 2001, Laurent Kabila was assassinated and replaced by his son, Joseph, who has been twice elected president since then and is president today.

In the meantime, the United Nations has built up its largest-ever peacekeeping force, currently called MONUSCO, in Eastern Congo, with 20,000 troops and a cost of some \$9 billion since it began its mission in 1999.

In July 2002, the DRC and Rwanda signed the Pretoria Accord, which called for Rwanda to remove

government in 2003, followed by two national elections, has given foreign investors and others hope that the DRC will remain peaceful enough to allow

for investment and economic activities to go on.

Ultimately, Kinshasa will have to gain full control of its own eastern territory, and secure its borders with neighbors. The DRC has paid a very high price in human suffering for the predations of covetous neighbors and disgruntled factions at home.

Economic development depends on peace and stability. After years of gruesome conflict, the DRC deserves lasting peace.

PROMISING

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Under the fertile soil, the DRC is a treasure trove of precious mineral resources, from copper and cobalt to gold and diamonds. Significant oil deposits have also been found. Demand for these resources, from timber to rare metals, is global and growing.

Yet with all this natural wealth, the World Bank estimates that the GDP per capita for DRC's 85 million people is about \$746 a year (in 2014), making it the second poorest country in the world (only Central African Republic is lower, at \$594 a year). The IMF has the GDP per capita figure at \$770 for 2015 and the CIA World Factbook estimates it at \$800 for 2015.

How could this be?

A quick look at the map will provide the first reason. For a country two-thirds the size of West Europe, there are only 2,000 miles of paved roads and 2,200 miles of railway tracks, many of these in poor condition. By comparison, Britain alone has 213,750 miles of paved roads, including 2,173 miles of motorways, and some 10,000 miles of railway lines.

The Congo and other major rivers and lakes provide some transportation relief in the form of 10,000 miles of navigable waterways. But how can you develop an economy in the 21st century without roads and railways to move materials and finished products from and to markets?

Which leads to this question: What role have government bodies played, and what role can they play, in the development of the country?

The DRC is among the lowest ranking nations on earth for economic freedom and ease of doing business. And it has a poor track record for governance. Add to this decades of civil war and a weak central government unable to secure national borders and you have an explanation for the lack of infrastructure development.

However, business has a funny way of solving its problems, and if public sector institutions lag because of poor management and/or inadequate budgets, the private sector will sometimes step in to fill the gap.

This is the main hope for the DRC in the short term. And it is not a vain hope either. China, which is now the most important international partner for the DRC (China-DRC trade was worth \$4.3 billion in 2014), in 2007 signed a deal through which — in exchange for cobalt and copper — Beijing committed to build or rehabilitate some 2,000 miles of roads, 1,500 miles of railroads, 32 hospitals, 145 health centers and two universities in the DRC.

This is a good start, assuming the agreement is fully implemented. But much more is needed, and again the growing international interest in DRC from investors might well prove to be critical.

A good example of what is possible comes from Guinea, in West Africa. There Rio Tinto, the global mining company, is building a 416-mile multi-user railway line from Simandou in the south of the country, where it is developing a huge iron ore extraction operation, to the northern port at Conakry, the capital.

Rio Tinto has already spent \$3 billion on the line and other development, out of a project estimated to cost \$20 billion in all. Rio Tinto gets the railway it needs to haul iron ore to a seaport,

and Guinea gets an important area of the country opened up for commerce and movement of people and goods.

In these two examples (China and Rio Tinto), the key to development proved to be government willingness to put in place policies and agreements that freed up the private sector and/or foreign investors of whatever kind, to invest heavily in infrastructure in exchange for access to natural resources.

In 2002, a Mining Code passed by the DRC Parliament in Kinshasa had the desired effect. By regulating the industry and giving investors clear rules to operate by (and profit by), the DRC managed to spur a robust and sustained wave of foreign direct investment in the mining sector, which continues to this date.

This wave of investment has been virtually unabated and raised the annual GDP growth rate from 6 percent in 2007 to 8 percent in 2014.

Could the success in mining be replicated in other sectors? Diversifying away from dependence on extraction industries is a clear priority of the DRC government, and with proper legislation and enforcement to protect investors there is no reason the success in the mining sector cannot be replicated elsewhere in the economy.

Abundant water and arable land are precious resources, as are forests. With some two-thirds of Congolese engaged in agriculture, and of these only 300,000 in commercial ventures (the rest in subsistence farming), the potential for development in the agricultural sector led by private investors is huge.

And this is where the government is putting much of its effort (see related story on agriculture).

In a July 2015 interview with World Finance magazine, DRC Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon stressed the need for his country to diversify its economy away from a traditional dependence on mining.

"While the country is very wealthy in natural endowments regarding mineral resources, it is imperative to diversify beyond this wealth alone to propel the Democratic Republic of Congo to a state that can compete economically on a global scale," he said.

"The agricultural sector is where we can have the most significant impact on the population," he added.

Electricity is in short, unreliable supply. This is a major constraint on growth. The \$80 billion-plus Grand Inga hydroelectric project will go a long way to addressing this energy need, as well as provide power to other African countries, especially South Africa. The World Bank is the lead international agency working with the DRC to get Grand Inga (including the Inga III dam) funded and built.

But DRC has vastly greater hydropower potential than just the Inga dams, and has the potential to meet all of Africa's electricity needs. For domestic consumption, basing plants on rivers in various parts of the country can reduce transmission costs and speed the much-needed electrification of the country.

A stable, prosperous DRC will be good for its citizens but also for the whole region and all of Africa. This "new DRC" is not beyond reach as we have seen it emerge from years of turmoil to go down a path of sustained national development.



UN PHOTO/SYLVAIN LIECHTI

A peacekeeper on patrol as a resident gathers wood in the Beni region, DRC.

related to the conflict in Eastern Congo, and the arrival of peace will enable Kinshasa to refocus its international agenda.

Of all the recent conflicts in Africa, the worst by almost any measure has been that in Eastern Congo. Here neighboring countries have taken advantage of a weak central government in Kinshasa to invade, back militias, rape and pillage.

Perhaps inevitably, the conflict drew in countries on all sides of the fighting, including several DRC neighbors who came to its defense. Altogether nine African countries have been involved in Eastern Congo fighting, as have at least 20 militia groups.

The result has been the greatest humanitarian disaster since World War II, in which some 5.4 million people have died and another 3 million are displaced from their homes. Countless others have suffered through rape, abuse and being forced into combat as child soldiers.

Much of the conflict and its lethal impact were hidden from the world because of the remoteness of this part of the DRC. Neighboring Rwanda and Uganda are much closer to the Eastern Congo than is Kinshasa, which is over 1,000 miles away. For most players, there were good reasons to hide what was really going on in the region.

The most recent period of conflict started with the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, in which the Hutu-dominated government led in the massacre of the Tutsi minority. In its aftermath, an estimated 2 million Hutus fled the country as (current Rwandan president) Paul Kagame's Tutsi forces took control of the country.

Among the refugees from Rwanda were perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. These Hutu

20,000 troops from Eastern Congo.

In December 2002, a peace agreement was signed between the government in Kinshasa and rebel groups operating primarily in the east. One result was the creation of a unity government in Kinshasa and agreement to hold elections. The agreed-upon transitional government took power in July 2003.

The peace was not lasting, however; fighting continued in the east among various groups and the national government army.

In February 2013, another peace agreement was signed, this time by 11 African nations, including DRC's nine neighbors and South Africa.

In late 2013, a joint MONUSCO-DRC military operation defeated the main pro-Rwandan Tutsi force in Eastern Congo — the M23 — which was backed by Rwanda's President Kagame and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

That left the anti-Rwandan Hutu FDLR and anti-Museveni Ugandan rebels (particularly The Lord's Army) operating in Eastern Congo, as well as various other militias, such as the Mai Mai, who have no particular ideology or affiliation but are armed groups formed to protect a group or area, even though they may ravage other communities in the process.

Rwanda still wants to defeat once and for all the FDLR, but the presence of a large United Nations force in the area is clearly a deterrent to Rwanda and Uganda, which value Western approval and support. However, the weakness of the poorly funded national army of the DRC means that Kinshasa itself is not yet ready to secure its own territory.

Nevertheless, the formation of a transitional

Diversification drive creates wide range of investment opportunities

By Fred Qadir

The vast natural resources, considerable arable land and energy potential of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been attracting investors to the region since the colonial period, and continue to bring billions of investment dollars into the country every year.

In addition, a population of about 85 million people and the DRC's location in the center of Africa, sharing borders with nine other African countries, together create a regional market hungry for goods and services.

The European Union, China, the United States and countries from all over the world have companies operating in the DRC, especially in the extraction industries, including mining, timber and the recently discovered new oil deposits.

According to data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the DRC received more than \$12 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) between 2010 and 2014. This was one of the strongest showings in Africa for this time period, despite limited infrastructure and sometimes difficult business environment.

This success is not accidental.

The government of the DRC has been making important strides in improving the business climate. The World Bank's Doing Business 2016 report on the DRC shows that the ease of starting a business in the country improved by 83 places compared with the 2015 report, climbing from 172 to 89 and placing



PHOTO: JEAN TIGANA

Tourism infrastructure like this new hotel is a target sector for inbound investment.

The World Bank's Doing Business 2016 report on the DRC shows that the ease of starting a business in the country improved by 83 places compared with the 2015 report, climbing from 172 to 89 and placing the country in the center of the global pack.

the country in the center of the global pack. The Doing Business reports measure the ease/difficulty of starting and operating a small-to-medium-sized business in 189 countries around the world.

Although the DRC continues to be a challenging environment for private investment, and its national rank for other indicators of the Doing Business report are not as good, the government has implemented a series of reforms to make it easier to do business.

According to the DRC Ministry of Planning, reforms include creation of the National Agency for Investment Promotion and a steering committee for the improvement of the business climate. It has also ratified the OHADA treaty (Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa), which improves the efficiency of trade disputes and other judicial processes, and currently includes 17 African countries.

Additional reforms outlined by the ministry

include establishment of a one-stop-shop for business creation, elimination of a minimum capital requirement for some types of companies and changing the sales tax to an added-value tax, as well as a series of changes to simplify the corporate tax code and cross-border trade rules.

A broader series of changes to improve the business climate and promote inbound investment cover rules on the transfer of property, obtaining licenses, execution of contracts, the protection of investors and liberalizing the code for the insurance markets, ministry documents show.

The DR Congo Investment Promotion Agency (ANAPI) has outlined target areas for FDI including: infrastructure, agriculture, mines, hydrocarbons, industry, transportation, energy, tourism, housing, telecommunications and forestry.

In 2013, the government adopted a National Agricultural Investment Plan which created an investment framework for 2013-2020. The goal of the plan is to grow the agricultural sector by more than 6 percent to ensure food security and create jobs, according to ANAPI.

The key component of the plan is the development of 20 agro-industrial parks spread throughout the country. The first park, Bukanga Lonzo, was inaugurated in Bandundu Province in July 2014, and is managed by SOPAGRI, a public-private partnership.

In the tourism sector, the government revised its 15-year master plan with the objective of achieving



PHOTO: JEAN TIGANA

The DRC government has made agriculture a priority sector for agro-industry investment.

1,150,000 international tourist arrivals, according to ANAPI. Possible areas for investment include development of recreation areas and amusement parks; tourist transportation options for "air, road, river and lake"; new hotels; and travel agencies.

Another sector ripe for additional investment is telephony and internet. Data from ANAPI shows that although mobile phone penetration is more

than 45 percent, the national coverage is only 20 percent, and internet and data penetration is only 2.6 percent. In this sector, the agency claims that there are no barriers to entry for new investors.

To encourage investment, the government of the DRC has done preliminary work in identifying suitable projects.

The Ministry of Planning released a 56-page document, "Major Projects Awaiting Funding," in December 2015. The document provides details on specific projects in the agriculture, infrastructure, tourism, energy and telecommunications/ITC sectors. Pre-feasibility or feasibility studies, including estimated costs, have already been prepared for most projects. The document can be found at investindrc.cd.

In addition, investors who apply by providing their business plans to ANAPI can benefit from a variety of incentives, including exemption from duties on imports of equipment and materials and tax exemption on profits and property. The length of these incentives varies from three to five years, based on the location of the investment.

To be eligible for these incentives, the new business must meet certain requirements, including proper registration as a Congolese business, a minimum investment of \$200,000 for a large company or \$10,000 for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), and compliance with environmental and labor laws, among others.

Resurgent mining sector leads economic growth

By Tim Cashion

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has long been known for its wealth of natural resources. Wars have been fought over them, and to this day they are the reason for neighbors meddling in DRC affairs, and militias and criminal gangs looking for ways to get hold of them for financial benefit.

In the colonial era, Belgium controlled the trade in rubber, copper and later gold and diamonds. These are still important exports of the DRC, but now the list of precious metals and other minerals exported to world markets is considerably longer.

Among leading export is cobalt, with the DRC providing 55 percent of the world consumption. Copper continues to be a major export too, and generates some 30 percent of the country's export revenue.

With growing stability and a stronger legal framework for investors, the steady flow of investment is likely to continue.

Other exports include niobium, tantalum, petroleum, industrial and gem diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, uranium, coal and timber. The uranium used for the first atomic bomb came from the DRC.

Today, mining is still the major source of national wealth and has been at the center of the DRC's robust gross domestic product (GDP) growth in recent years. This growth was made possible by a relatively stable situation in the country after the civil war largely came to an end with a peace agreement that took hold in 2003.

Also important to the industry was the adoption by DRC Parliament in 2002 of a Mining Code that regulates the industry. This was developed with assistance from the World Bank, and took much of the risk out of making investments in the mining sector.

With clear rules in place, foreign direct

investment has soared, with most of it in the extraction industries.

Over the five years between 2010 to 2014, the mining sector saw an annual average of \$2.56 billion in foreign direct investment (out of a total annual average FDI of \$4.06 billion), according to Ministry of Mines data. Thus foreign investment in mining over this five-year period represented 63 percent of total foreign investment in the DRC.

A recent KPMG country auditing guide for the DRC lists 31 major foreign and 29 domestic

companies active in the mining sector. These lists continue to grow as the DRC becomes increasingly an investment destination with manageable risk.

Currently, the largest international player in the DRC's economy is China, which accounts for 40 percent of all DRC exports, as well as 20 percent

of imports. As with most foreign investment and trading activities, most of the Chinese activity is in the mining sector.

In September 2007, two large Chinese state construction companies signed a \$6 billion deal with Gecamines, DRC's state-owned copper company, to exchange output from the Dima mining complex for grants, loans and infrastructure development.

Under this agreement, China would get 11.7 million tons of copper and 690,729 tons of cobalt. As part of its commitment, Beijing would build or

rehabilitate some 2,000 miles of roads, 1,500 miles of railroads, 32 hospitals, 145 health centers and two universities in the DRC.

Accurate statistics for the mining sector, as with other areas of the economy, are hard to come by in part because of the impact of conflicts in the past.

Both Rwanda and Uganda supported militias in the eastern part of the DRC, and took considerable resources for themselves. Furthermore, many small operators are found only in the informal economy.

But the overall pace-setting growth of the DRC economy in recent years is a testament to the strength of its mining sector. Year-on-year GDP growth was 6 percent in 2007 and rose steadily each year, with only one dip, to 9 percent in 2014.

This sustained economic expansion makes DRC a growth leader among African economies.

It has been estimated that the DRC has natural resources worth \$24 trillion. However accurate this figure is, it cannot be disputed that this is one of the richest nations in the world for potential exploitation of minerals and other valuable natural resources.

With growing stability and a stronger legal framework for investors, the steady flow of investment is likely to continue.

One concern is the shortfall of electricity, a critical input for mining and related industries. It is estimated that there is a shortfall of some 450 MW, requiring rationing of power.

The original Inga hydropower plants on the Congo River were built in part to provide electricity to the extraction industries, but that was in the 1970s. Generating equipment is old and no longer efficient.

The new Inga III Dam, if built, will provide as much as 1,300 MW to the mining sector, especially in mineral-rich Katanga Province. The anticipated demand from the mining industry is one of the reasons the DRC expects to be able to raise the necessary funds to build the dam and plant.

As mining output increases, it will become increasingly important for the DRC to develop a good quality transportation infrastructure to facilitate getting the goods to international markets.

Hence the China deal will be a boon to this sector if implemented successfully.

There will also be growing opportunities in related industries, for processing raw materials and manufacturing. All these activities will create new jobs and improve the lives of Congolese.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Giant copper ore trucks in open pit mine

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PHOTOS:JEAN TIGANA

With investment, the DRC could be a major exporter of food and agriculture products.

A potential agricultural powerhouse for Africa

By TIM CASHION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second largest country in Africa, after Algeria, but unlike the arid north African state, the DRC is endowed by nature with forest that covers two-thirds of the country, including the second-largest rainforest in the world (after Brazil's), and 66 million acres of agricultural land, fed with ample supplies of fresh water from rainfall, rivers and lakes.

With this rich natural endowment and a climate ideal for most agriculture, the DRC has the potential to be an agricultural powerhouse for Africa.

Already it has about a half of all Africa's forestland, which is being exploited for timber. But the key to achieving the ambition of becoming a major exporter of agricultural products is to transform the bulk of activities in the sector from subsistence to commercial farming.

USAID estimates that the agriculture sector currently employs 62 percent of DRC's men and 84 percent of its women, who produce 42.5 percent of the country's gross domestic product, estimated as \$63.27 billion in 2015 (PPP).

However, the bulk of this work is subsistence farming, with only 300,000 people engaged in commercial farming. (The high percentage of the population engaged in subsistence farming is typical of many African countries.)

According to the World Bank, 103,238 square miles or 66,072,320 acres (11.6 percent of DRC's 905,600 square miles, or 580,160,000 acres, of territory) is agricultural land, usable for crops and pastureland. Of this area, 30,790 square miles (19,725,440 acres), or 3.4 percent of the total territory, is arable.

But it is estimated that only 10 percent of the DRC's agricultural land is currently being used, due to a range of problems, from conflicts in the east to lack of investment and inadequate infrastructure for commercial farming and transport to markets.

In the conflict areas, people have been driven from their farms and livestock has been killed or stolen. Many young men have been drawn to mining,

where investment is increasing and job-creation expanding.

Cassava is the most widely grown crop in DRC, with plantain, corn, rice and yams also common. The tropical climate and plentiful water mean that fruits, including mangos, oranges, guavas, papayas, avocados and bananas, grow very well.

Overall, the main products of DRC agriculture are



PHOTOS:JEAN TIGANA

The government aims to use agriculture to boost employment among youth.

coffee, sugar, palm oil, rubber, tea, cotton, cocoa, quinine, cassava (manioc, tapioca), bananas, plantains, peanuts, root crops, corn, fruits, and wood products.

Of these, only coffee, cocoa, rubber, palm oil

and tea represent significant exports from the agriculture sector, and much food is imported. In fact agricultural production has dropped 40 percent since 1990, underscoring the need for development and investment in this sector.

The government of DRC President Joseph Kabila, headed by Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon, is working to change this situation, with plans to greatly expand commercial agriculture.

In a 2013 interview with Voice of America, Prime Minister Matata Ponyo said: "I have been busy working in order to make agriculture a priority sector not on a small scale, but into an agro-based industry." He added that the DRC is "... in partnership with experts who are coming from all over the place, even from Harvard University, to help us to set up agro-industrial machinery that will be capable of facing the future challenges."

Ultimately, it will be private business interest in agriculture that will transform this sector. Given its abundance of natural resources critical to agriculture, the DRC is a natural destination for investment in this area.

In the interview, he noted that the DRC continues to depend on food imports, whereas it could well be a major exporter of agricultural products and food.

"Agriculture can also help us resolve the issue of macroeconomic stability because today we spend about \$1.3 billion to import food stuffs," he said. "So, if we produce everything we consume today, we are capable of saving \$1.3 billion per year."

The premier also noted that the government aims to use agriculture to boost employment among youth.

The agricultural potential is clear. The DRC has fertile soil and ample freshwater supplies. It lacks agricultural support programs and sources of investment funding. It also lacks the critical

infrastructure, especially road and rail networks needed to get agricultural products to markets or to processing centers.

To address the apparent deficiencies in the sector, the government adopted the Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS). This strategy focuses on six priorities for the 2004 to 2013 period: 1) financing for the rural sector; 2) rehabilitating and maintaining infrastructure, including rural roads and water access; 3) improving the fiscal environment for agricultural development; 4) technical advisory services for producers; 5) relaunching agricultural scientific research; and 6) guaranteed access to land.

This program was followed by the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP), which focuses on five areas for investment, both domestic and international, and brings together initiatives in the sector. It is designed to be the national structure of agricultural development from 2013 to 2020.

The NAIP priorities are: 1) development of vegetable value chains; 2) development of the livestock sector; 3) development of fisheries; 4) creating agriculture enterprise clusters; and 5) establishing standards and quality control for agricultural products.

Ultimately, it will be private business interest in agriculture that will transform this sector. Given its abundance of natural resources critical to agriculture, the DRC is a natural destination for investment in this area.

The main challenge will be creating the necessary infrastructure to support investment, primarily the transport networks to get agricultural products to market.

The Congo River itself is an important waterway for commerce, and has long been used extensively for that purpose, although the Livingstone Falls block access to the sea. Together with other rivers and lakes, the DRC has some 10,000 miles of waterways.

However, the limited land-transportation infrastructure will require massive investments to enable DRC agriculture to be competitive. There are currently less than 2,000 miles of paved roads and 2,200 miles of railway lines in all of the DRC.

Add black gold to DRC's list of natural riches

By TIM CASHION

While the Democratic Republic of the Congo has long been known for its wide array of minerals and other natural resources, oil and gas have not been included in that long list. This is beginning to change and the DRC could join the growing club of major sub-Saharan oil producers, currently headed by Nigeria and Angola.

With most of Angola's oil being extracted from the seabed of the Atlantic south and north (offshore the Angolan enclave of Cabinda) of the DRC's short, 23-mile coastline, as well as neighbor

To put the Oil of DR Congo find into perspective, the size of the reserves it discovered are equivalent to those in Britain and South Sudan.

Republic of Congo getting significant quantities of oil from its Atlantic seabed, it was long believed that the DRC should also have offshore oil.

And indeed it does have oil, but only small quantities have been found so far. Exploration started in the early 1960s, and continued into the 1970s and 1980s. Forty-one wells were sunk. Of these, eventually five produced oil and one produced gas.

Chevron found oil in 1973, and this oil has been pumped since 1976. Gas is not exploited. The current operator of these offshore-extraction activities is Anglo-French independent producer Perenco, which said in 2015 it produced 22,500 barrels per day from the DRC's offshore wells.

"All the produced crude is stored on board the Kalamu floating terminal, which can store up to 1 million barrels of oil," Perenco states on its website.

But as with the DRC's west coast logic of finding oil and gas in an area of the ocean belonging to country A if it is surrounded by oil- and gas-producing wells in countries B and C, significant finds by Uganda, on its side of Lake Albert, have spurred the DRC to explore for hydrocarbons on its eastern frontier.

Three companies — London-based Tullow Oil Plc, Total SA of France, and China National Offshore Oil Corp. — have drilled over 100 wells on the Ugandan side of Lake Albert, and the Ugandan government has estimated its oil reserves at 6.5 billion barrels.

Uganda recently announced that it planned to begin production in 2018 and that it would build a \$4 billion, 800-mile pipeline to the Tanzanian port of Tanga to export its crude. This will be the first oil pipeline in East Africa.

Some of the Ugandan crude will also be used to supply a 60,000 bpd refinery to be built at Hoima, not far from the lake.

On the DRC side of Lake Albert, exploration has also turned up positive results. In August 2014, Oil of DR Congo, a company controlled by Israeli billionaire Dan Gertler, announced that it had found some 3 billion barrels of oil at the lake.

To put the Oil of DR Congo find into perspective, the size of the reserves it discovered are equivalent to those in Britain and South Sudan. The company said exploitation of these resources could add 25 percent to the DRC's gross domestic product.

In June 2015, the DRC Parliament in Kinshasa adopted a hydrocarbons code to help bring law and order to the industry, which has been



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

The modest amount of oil currently extracted by the DRC is offshore in the Atlantic seabed.

largely unregulated in the DRC to date, fostering corruption.

In a more controversial development, in 2007 the Congolese ministry of hydrocarbons awarded two oil concessions that straddle the borders of DRC's storied Virunga National Park, the first such park established in Africa and which is home to gorillas, other apes and a wide range of species, some of which are rare.

French major Total SA gave up its concession, but SOCO International, a British oil company, did seismic studies that confirmed the presence of oil reserves under the park. Widespread international opposition to developing wells in the area have prevented any movement so far, but Kinshasa has said it will consider granting exploitation rights if

UNESCO indicates that this World Heritage Site will not be negatively impacted by the oil industry.

It is not clear how the DRC will get its oil to market, given the lack of any pipeline or of good roads or railway lines to carry such freight. And given DRC's uneasy relations with Uganda, it is not likely that Kinshasa would want to depend on the Ugandan pipeline to Tanga, even if Kampala did offer that option.

Also, at the moment the DRC does not have a working refinery, having closed the only one in the country, SOCIR, in 1998. However, the new availability of locally produced oil might well spur construction of one, as it has in Uganda.



COUNTRY PROFILE

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Location: Central Africa, northeast of Angola

Total Area: 905,354 square miles (slightly less than one-fourth the size of the U.S.)

Border Countries (9): Angola 2,646 km, Burundi 236 km, Central African Republic 1,747 km, Republic of the Congo 1,229 km, Rwanda 221 km, South Sudan 714 km, Tanzania 479 km, Uganda 877 km, Zambia 2,332 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)

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

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

Religions: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 20%, Kimbanguist 10%, Muslim 10%, other (includes syncretic sects and indigenous beliefs) 10%

Population: 79,375,136

Major Urban Areas and pPopulation: KINSHASA (capital) 11.587 million; Lubumbashi 2.015 million; Mbuji-Mayi 20.007 million; Kananga 1.169 million; Kisangani 1.04 million; Bukavu 832,000 (2015)

GDP - Purchasing Power Parity: \$62.87 billion (2015 est.)

Official Exchange Rate: \$38.87 billion (2015 est.)

By sector of origin: agriculture 20.3%, industry 33.5%, services 46.2% (2015 est.)

Agriculture - products: coffee, sugar, palm oil, rubber, tea, cotton, cocoa, quinine, cassava (manioc, tapioca), bananas, plantains, peanuts, root crops, corn, fruits, wood products

Industries: mining (copper, cobalt, gold, diamonds, coltan, zinc, tin, tungsten), mineral processing, consumer products (textiles, plastics, footwear, cigarettes), metal products, processed foods and beverages, timber, cement, commercial ship repair

Budget Surplus (+) or Deficit (-): -1.9% of GDP (2015 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 1% (2015 est.)

Exports: \$12.4 billion (2015 est.)

Commodities: diamonds, copper, gold, cobalt, wood products, crude oil, coffee

Partners: China 39.3%, Zambia 24.7%, Italy 8.6%, Belgium 4.4% (2014)

Imports: \$12.34 billion (2015 est.)

Commodities: foodstuffs, mining and other machinery, transport equipment, fuels

Partners: China 19.6%, South Africa 17.9%, Zambia 15.9%, Belgium 6.1%, Zimbabwe 4.9% (2014)

Source: CIA World Factbook

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With help from international partners, the DRC tackles basic infrastructure needs



PHOTO: MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS (ITP) DRC

The new and old Lualaba bridges next to each other.

By FRED QADIR

Every government recognizes that strong national infrastructure is critically important to steady economic development. Transportation infrastructure is one of the lubricants that keeps the gears of an economy operating smoothly.

For the Democratic Republic of the Congo, infrastructure has long been underfunded and poorly maintained, but that is beginning to change.

Fridolin Kasweshi, Minister for Infrastructure, Public Works, and Reconstruction, said that the country requires \$1 billion per year to upgrade and maintain its roads, according to a Radio Okapi interview conducted in March 2016. As the government does not have those funds, a three-tier plan has been developed, he said.

A key constraint to infrastructure development in the DRC is simply size. The DRC is a vast country, encompassing about 905,600 square miles (slightly bigger than the United States east of the Mississippi) with huge equatorial forests, difficult terrain and crisscrossing rivers.

To date, the country has depended on a network of navigable waterways, roads, railroads and small airports to move goods and people around the country. But that network is inefficient, due to the multiple transfers necessary to cross the country, and it is reaching its capacity. To maintain and increase the DRC's rate of economic development, the national infrastructure needs investment.

Currently, the DRC has approximately 95,000 miles of roads of which about 1,850 miles are fully paved. Its railroad network runs about 2,490 miles. Those networks are supplemented by more than 170 airports, of which 26 are paved and three accept

international flights.

Agricultural extension, internal and international trade and the continued development of the mining industry depend on the maintenance and expansion of this network, according to development experts.

"National unity and economic stability are DRC government's two top priorities," said Ahmadou Moustapha Ndiaye, World Bank Country Director for the DRC, in a World Bank announcement. "Accordingly, improving the transport sector's performance constitutes a vital goal for the government, and spending on transport can be considered core development spending."

Minister Kasweshi outlined the three-tier development plan in the Radio Okapi interview. The first tier depends on private business. Where there is sufficient economic activity, public-private partnerships (PPPs) can finance paved roads, Minister Kasweshi suggested. These roads must have at least 15,000 vehicles per year to be sustainable, he said.

The second tier aims to develop 2,200 miles of ultra-priority roads with the help of the African Development Bank, the European Union, and the World Bank. "But many routes are not eligible for this type of funding and must depend on the public treasury," Minister Kasweshi said.

The third tier is to use DRC resources to complete roads. But the financial resources are limited and alone are not sufficient to address the road infrastructure problems in the country, the minister said.

Pieces of the plan are already being put in place. In February, the World Bank approved an IDA (International Development Association) credit facility of \$125 million for reopening and maintaining high-priority roads.

This credit is part of a larger project to improve about 5,600 miles of earth roads with the goal of connecting key areas in Orientale, North and South Kivu, Katanga and Equateur, as well as access to parts of Uganda and the Central African Republic, according to a World Bank announcement.

"This would facilitate internal connectivity and enhance trade opportunities between different parts of Congo. Furthermore, it would reduce the isolation of large parts of the Eastern provinces of Congo caused by decades of conflict, and lack of infrastructure," said Alexandre Dossou, World Bank Task Team Leader for the project.

The railroad system is also a target for new investment. The main railways of the DRC are not connected to each other, but do connect to the country's approximately 10,000 miles of navigable waterways and roads.

The Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer du Congo (SNCC) connects some provinces in the interior including Katanga, Kasais, South Kivu and Maniema. The Société Commerciale des Transports et des Ports (SCTP) runs the line between the seaport of Matadi and the capital, Kinshasa. This line was relaunched in March of 2015 after 10 years of suspension, according to a Radio Okapi report.

Mostly inherited from colonial times and updated in the 1970s, the railways of the DRC are in need of upgrades and maintenance, according to the World Bank's DRC Multi-modal Transport Report.

In 2010, the World Bank provided some funding to refurbish or upgrade about 1,000 miles of track, mostly between the copper mining region and the border with Zambia, as well as between Kamina, Kabalo and Mwene Ditu.

In June 2013, the Bank also reported approval of \$290 million in International Development Association (IDA) funds targeted at railway infrastructure, primarily to support the agricultural sector.

"DRC is the largest country in Sub-Saharan Africa with huge potential for feeding its own people and, the rest of the continent," Eustache Ouayoro, World Bank Country Director for the DRC, was quoted in the 2013 announcement of World Bank funding for railways.

"We welcome the opportunity to support the Government's plans to rebuild its railroad system and build up its agriculture sector. These projects will help boost income, food security and overall livelihoods for the country's poorest people," he said.

Other parts of the budget gap are being covered by international agreements, especially with China. According to the Africa Report, the governments of the DRC and China signed an agreement in 2007 in which China would provide a line of credit to mine cobalt and copper, and improve DRC infrastructure.

In exchange for 68 percent ownership in Simcomines, the Chinese firms Sinohydro Corp. and China Railway Group Limited would build roads, railways and hospitals. The Congolese state-owned companies Gécamines and the Société Immobilière du Congo own the remaining 32 percent of the shares.

The initial \$6 billion deal was revised down to about \$3 billion over concerns from the International Monetary Fund that a debt of \$6 billion would be unsustainable. The deal was also briefly suspended due to operational and management issues, according to Reuters and the Africa Report.

The deal, however, is back on track after these hiccups. The ASIA Miner magazine reported that the Chinese were involved in 10 infrastructure projects between 2008 and 2014, and were projected to spend \$250 million in 2015 on stadiums, roads and other projects.

Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

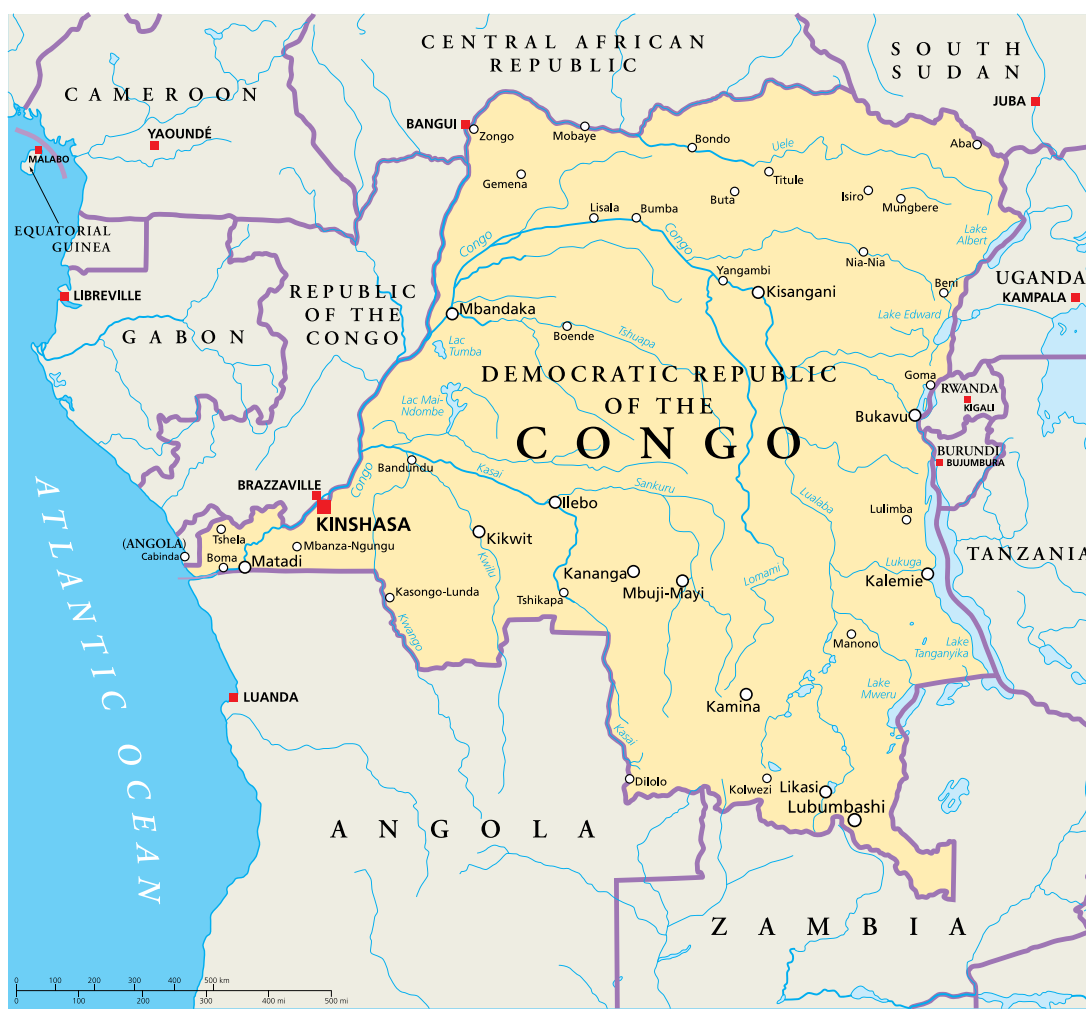


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

A lot safer but still an adventure

By TIM CASHION

The name “Congo” conjures up images of rushing rivers, impenetrable forests, volcanos and fantastic wildlife, especially gorillas. Rightly so. They are all to be found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But travel there has for many years been perceived as fairly risky business, especially in the east of the country where fighting has raged for two decades. It is in the east, however, where Africa’s first national park, Virunga, is located, and where some of the most beautiful scenery can be found. (See related story.)

Today, travel to the DRC, other than its eastern areas, is likely similar to that in other African countries. This means that you need to be alert, avoid areas of towns that are little frequented by foreigners, and stay off the streets at night.

Kinshasa is said to be safer than some other major African cities, so no need to take precautions above and beyond those you would take in cities like Nairobi and Johannesburg.

However, the British government warns visitors to stay clear of Eastern Congo, except for major cities, notably Goma and Bukavu, because

of the continued presence of armed groups in the region.

The best season to travel is June to December, when temperatures are generally cooler.

And getting around the country is getting better. The Congo River has long had boats for passengers and cargo that move between Kisangani and the area above Livingstone Falls, where the capital Kinshasa is located. However, these are not tourist craft and using them for travel is definitely roughing it.

This is still an adventure destination for the tourist who wants to see the little-seen, and experience the little-experienced.

There are private operators, like Go Congo and Danico, which provide boats with crew and can make sure you arrive at your destination safely.

And for fishing enthusiasts, the Congo is teeming with species, although it is best known for the Goliath Tigerfish, which is large and feared by many of the villagers. “Capitaine,” or Nile perch, is a favorite on Congolese dinner tables.



PHOTO: JEAN TIGANA

A resort on one of the many lakes in the DRC.

The road system is very limited and many sections in poor repair, but Chinese firms are carrying out a massive program of building new roads and fixing existing ones.

The Chinese are also refurbishing and building new railway lines. In 2013 they finished a comfortable train that runs from the Atlantic coast to the interior. Many consider it the best railway service in Africa.

Hotels in the major cities are multiplying and improving, with several international brands getting established, especially in the capital Kinshasa, where a Kempinski started the influx of high-end brands. Tourist rooms are available from about \$80 for a reasonable hotel up to \$300 a night for five-star properties.

There are 20 airlines that now serve Kinshasa, supporting the growing international travel associated with the resurgent economy and giving tourists good options for a visit to the country.

From Kinshasa, it is easier to fly to other parts of Congo since travel overland (or by boat) can be very time-consuming. And, away from Kinshasa expect services to atrophy. You will probably need cash (outside of major hotels) when you travel beyond the capital.

If you do venture to the east, this is the region of the great lakes that run down the rift valley (Albert, Edward, Kiva, Tanganyika — the world’s second largest by volume and depth — and Mweru), Virunga National Park and volcanic Mount Nyiragongo and its lava lake.

But the east is still a relatively dangerous part of the country, with violent outbreaks taking place from time to time. It’s probably a good idea to keep this region for your next visit.

The DRC is not yet a country where you are likely to bump into hordes of tourists at major attractions. This is still an adventure destination for the tourist who wants to see the little-seen, and experience the little-experienced.

A moving musical message

In 2009, when the World Wildlife Fund wanted to draw attention to the desperate plight of the mountain gorillas in Virunga, they asked popular Congolese musician Samba Mapangala and his Orchestra Virunga to write a song.

The resulting rumba n’dombolo tune, “Les Gorilles des Montagnes,” with accompanying YouTube video of gorillas in the forest, explains that the animals are crucial for successful ecotourism, which will in turn improve the lives of local residents.

The song also praises the rangers and other conservationists who protect the critically endangered gorillas and their habitat, sometimes at the cost of their own lives.

Recorded in Swahili — the most commonly spoken language in the Virunga region — “Les Gorilles des Montagnes” was distributed free throughout in the Congo Basin.

Find the song here: [youtube.com/watch?v=9HTTM6qfO6M&list=RD9HTTM6qfO6M#t=31](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HTTM6qfO6M&list=RD9HTTM6qfO6M#t=31).



PHOTO: JEAN TIGANA

The new terminal at N'djili International Airport, Kinshasa, is expected to serve up to 1 million passengers a year.

PARKS

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future of the communities around Salonga will be much brighter if their futures are secured.”

The value of Virunga

Virunga, in eastern DRC, is the African continent’s most biologically diverse protected area. Its website lists a multitude of endangered species under its protection, including okapi (in the giraffe family), hippopotami, chimpanzees, both forest and savanna elephants, lions, and 50 species of birds. They range across some 3,000 square miles (7,800 square kilometers) of forests, savannas, active volcanoes and lava plains, lakes and rivers, swampland, the Rwenzori Mountains, and the only glacial peaks on the continent.

In the past few years, tourism at Virunga National Park has received endorsements from highly acclaimed travel-destination publications, including Travel + Leisure, The New York Times Magazine and Town & Country, which describes the park’s Mikenno Lodge as a “jewel!”

The park offers intimate guided treks to view its majestic mountain gorillas and cheerful chimpanzees as they feed, rest and play. But there are other unique ecotourism activities at Virunga. According to the park’s website (Learn more at visitvirunga.org), these include:

• The Rwenzori Mountains

With peaks rising to 16,795 ft. (5,119 meters), the Rwenzoris have the largest glaciers left on the African continent. Visitors will encounter bamboo forests, alpine meadows, lakes and snow-capped peaks, and will encounter forest elephants, okapi, chimpanzees and numerous bird species. The best weather for climbing and trekking in the Rwenzoris is usually January through mid-March and June to late August.

• The Mount Nyiragongo stratovolcano and lava lake

While chimpanzees, monkeys and bushbuck make their homes in the forests on the lower slopes, Mount Nyiragongo’s summit rim is bare, allowing visitors to look down into the fiery molten lava lake. Although predictable and safe for tourists, Nyiragongo is still a live volcano and is dangerous during eruptions.

• Tchegera Island Camp

Located on the northern shore of Lake Kivu, Tchegera offers spectacular views of the lake and four volcanoes. On clear nights, Nyiragongo and Nyamulagira volcanoes light up the night with their red-hot glowing lava. The island is also a haven for African eagles, cormorants, herons, and gulls. Visitors can explore other parts of the island in a sea kayak or by paddleboard, or choose to relax on the beach.

Yet the park’s marvelous diversity is under siege. One filmmaker brought the realities of the park’s present-day dangers to millions of viewers in his film named simply, “Virunga.”

Among the film’s messages are the devastating consequences that poaching and struggles for power have had upon the park’s most peaceful residents: the



PHOTO: JEAN TIGANA

DRC National Parks boast a wide variety of unique wildlife.

mountain gorillas, one of the three species of Great Apes found at Virunga. There are only 880 alive in the world today. (See sidebar, “Documentary Film Nominated for Academy Award.”)

The desire to save the mountain gorillas has led to international support and made them a worldwide symbol of both civil unrest and civic pride in the DRC. (See sidebar, “A Moving Musical Message.”)

Caring for the community in Garamba

The value of supporting the local community is nowhere more evident than at Garamba National Park, in the northeast corner of the country on the border with South Sudan. Established in 1938 as one of the first national parks in Africa, the park was proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980.

The park’s variety of terrain, including grasslands, rivers, forests and swamps, are home to four different large mammals, according to UNESCO: elephants, giraffes, hippopotami and white rhinoceros; of the latter species, only some 30 individuals remain.

African Parks explains on its website that Garamba has been a hot spot for poaching since the late 1970s, when the park’s elephant population

began to plummet due to the illegal ivory trade. From an estimated 22,000 elephants, the park has only 5,000 today.

The Kordofan giraffe that lives there is also critically endangered, with only a handful remaining. Elephants and giraffes require vast tracts of land to roam in search of food and water. In all of Congo, Garamba’s 4,900 square kilometers of protected land may very likely be “the last stronghold” for these iconic African animals.

This is why the partnership that has been formed by African Parks and the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) to manage the park is of such great importance — and why efforts to increase security of local communities and wildlife alike have taken a dramatic turn since Garamba became an African Parks project in 2005.

For example: In 2014, park managers were able to purchase a helicopter so rangers could easily and quickly monitor all areas of the park. Aircraft runways throughout the park, as well as miles of interior roads, received repairs as well. Radio collars for some of the giraffes are also allowing rangers to monitor their movements.

The people who call Garamba home have also benefited in the past few years, as attention to education, employment and medical care have greatly improved the quality of life. For example:

- A new school constructed in 2012 has been a boon to educational opportunities in the region. Environmental education programs are helping thousands of students and their teachers stay informed about the valuable natural resources all around them. In addition, the State has organized the distribution of four tons of textbooks to 20,000 students.

- Jobs created by the park include law enforcement and community relations. Especially useful are the “livelihood diversification programs” that create sustainable sources of income for the communities that live in the areas surrounding Garamba, including training on agricultural practices, bee-keeping, fish farming, and best practices for reforestation and animal husbandry.

- The Nagero Hospital opened its doors in 2013, and for the first time, local people are receiving medical care. Proper equipment and medical supplies enable hospital staff to perform surgeries and run laboratory tests on-site. Free medical care and medication are benefits of employment with the park, while people in nearby communities receive free consultations. A visitor lodge and new housing for staff and volunteers also have been built.

Through leadership and dedication, the park managers, the rangers and the local citizens of the DRC are rekindling the charge to protect and enhance their country’s wildlife and ecosystems.

With financial and moral support from local and international people and organizations, and with a cessation of civil violence, it can be hoped that the land and its residents will thrive for many generations to come.

Documentary nominated for Academy Award

In 2015, the film “Virunga” was nominated for an Academy Award in the category of Best Documentary, and won a Creative Art Emmy® Award for Best Cinematography.

Directed by British filmmaker Orlando von Einsiedel and with Leonardo DiCaprio as executive producer, the film was initially expected to focus on the ecotourism at Virunga.

But the filmmakers and the film’s participants are caught in the crossfire when the newly formed M23 rebel group declares war, a plot to illegally drill for oil is uncovered, and the park’s rangers face threats to their lives and the lives of the animals they have sworn to protect.

Featured in the film is André Bauma, the head caregiver for orphan gorillas at the Senkweke Mountain Gorilla Center. His pledge to lay down his life to protect the park’s mountain gorillas is as poignant as it is courageous: more than 130 DRC park rangers have been killed in the line of duty over the last 20 years.

The film is available for watching through Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/title/80009431>

The roots and rhythms of the Congo

The rumba rhythm is at the heart of modern Congolese music



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

By PAT SINCLAIR

You may think you don't know anything about Congolese music. But if you've ever tapped your foot to the irresistible beat of the rumba, you've experienced a national tradition.

Rumba originated in Cuba as a blend of African and Latin rhythms. The World Music Network, in its article, "The Music of Congo," describes the Congolese rumba as "a musical form that hit a nerve throughout Africa and had a bigger

energetic, with interactive guitars and almost no horns. It took elements from shanty-town music and wordplay, bringing an extra vitality to the music. It was the group Zaïko Langa Langa that led the way for the whole post-independence generation.

Unlike other bands, Zaïko was not the personal property of one leader. It was a group of over 20 musicians. Other New Wave groups appeared in the 1970s, featuring a rough, sweaty feel while the singers compensated with honey-toned vocals."

It was also during the '70s that "cavacha" dance music from bands such as Zaïko and Orchestra Shama Shama dominated in East and Central Africa. The online dictionary definitions.net describes cavacha as "a fast-paced rhythm created from the sound of a train, typically played on a drum kit, often with the snare drum or hi-hat"; it's fun to note that in the DRC, the cavacha rhythm is referred as machini ya kauka, which, in Lingala, means literally, the engine of Kauka — Kauka is a Kinshasa neighborhood where the headquarters of the Office National des Transports, which operate ferries and trains, is located.

The website Musiques d'Afrique says that Congolese singer Samba Mapangala and his band Orchestra Virunga, named for the Virunga Mountains of the DRC, released their first album Malako Disco in 1982. It became an instant hit on the European music scene. Based today in the U.S. and still active in the music scene, Samba Mapangala used his celebrity star power to write and perform a song with video for a 2009 awareness campaign about the critically endangered mountain gorillas of Virunga National Park.

Musiques d'Afrique also notes that M'bilia Bel joined the group Afrisa during the mid-1980s, and went on to become one of Africa's first female superstars. "More recently, Tshala Mwana has found fame as the queen of the 'funk-folk rhythm known as 'mutuashi.'"



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

In 1960, "Independence Cha Cha," which celebrated the country's independence from Belgium, became the anthem of the newly named Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the rumba became its permanent musical heartbeat.

the big bands and big sound, with acoustic bass, percussion, brass, and multiple electric guitars. According to the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, v. 1 Africa, "the lead guitar part in Congolese rumba recalls the blue-tinged guitar solos heard in bluegrass and rockabilly music of the 1950s." Latin, Caribbean, folk, and soul music influences became increasingly important in this period, with Papa Wemba and Sam Mangwana well-known as band leaders and singers.

In 1960, Joseph Kabasele Tshamala ("le Grand Kalle") and his group, Grand Kallé et l'African Jazz (often referred to simply as African Jazz) released their iconic song, "Independence Cha Cha." The cumulative effect on Western dance floors than any other African music," and calls Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, "Africa's undisputed musical heart."

According to the article, a number of factors led to "the cross-border popularity" of Congolese music: "It was 'non-tribal,' using the interethnic trading language, Lingala. The guitar style was an amalgam of influences from Central and West Africa. Finally, postwar Belgian Congo was booming and traders were taking advantage of the commercial potential, including the sale of records. Early Congolese labels released a deluge of 78 rpm recordings, and in the early 1940s Radio Congo Belge started African music broadcasts."

Independence

The 1950s and 1960s in Congo was the era of

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Reinvention

Congolese rumba eventually evolved into the faster-paced "soukous" (from the French word "secouer" — "to shake"), which is distinguished by syncopated rhythms and intricate contrasting guitar melodies and often features several vocalists. Soukous was popularized by Tabu Ley Rochereau, Koffi Olomide and the group Wenge Musica, among others.

The World Music Network credits 1970s student groups like Thu Zahina with starting "a new stream of pop music" when they began to use the Western rock-group format. "The new music was raw and

energetic, with interactive guitars and almost no horns. It took elements from shanty-town music and wordplay, bringing an extra vitality to the music. It was the group Zaïko Langa Langa that led the way for the whole post-independence generation.

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Past meets future

According to Musiques d'Afrique, the most popular solo singer in Congolese music today is 40-year-old Fally Ipupa, who began singing with Koffi Olomide's group Quartier Latin in 1999. Fally Ipupa says his vocal influences include Papa Wemba as well as Werrason and J.B. Mpiana (both from Congo-Kinshasa), while he credits Koffi for influencing his song lyrics. At the same time, North-American R&B and soul influences can be heard in his music.

In each generation of Congolese music, up-and-coming artists develop new musical styles from rumba's roots. The Pan African Allstars website puts it succinctly: "Congo music, rumba, soukous, ndombolo, call it what you want, has been tops in African Music and influenced just about every African music style. From the '50s with professional bands with electric guitars, horns and percussion to 'soukous' in the '80s up to today's 'ndombolo,' Congolese music, like African Music, is forever evolving."

The music world loses a Congolese legend

Not just fans of African music, but the global music scene lost a favorite son in April 2016, when Congolese singer and icon Papa Wemba died at age 66 during a performance at the Festival des musiques urbaines d'Anoumabo (FEMUA) in Côte d'Ivoire.

Since the early 1970s, Jules Shungu Wembadio Pene Kikumba sang with various musical groups that he started and led. Over the decades, he became known not only for his singing talent and innovative musical style but for his influence on other musicians. Especially in the DRC, what Papa Wemba and others of his generation started allowed young singers to develop a wide range of music at home and in other countries.

According to the website Musiques d'Afrique, "Papa Wemba was among the greatest of all Congolese vocalists and bandleaders [and] has been a leading role in important bands such as Zaïko Langa Langa, Isifi Lokole, Yoka Lokole, and founded himself Viva la Musica, and also Nouvelle Ecriture / Nouvelle Ecrite, Nouvelle Tendance, and Village Molokai."

BBC News online reported that many African music stars shared their sorrow on social media, including Angelique Kidjo, King Kikii, Femi Kuti and Koffi Olomide, who grew up in the DRC. In a video on his Facebook page, Koffi Olomide said, "Congolese music has been decimated, it's been blown apart... I want to give my condolences to all Congolese people and all Africans."

Perhaps Manu Dibango, who played with le Grand Kalle in the early '60s, wrote on his Facebook page the most fitting epitaph: "Africa has lost another worthy son in the shape of Papa Wemba... He was the voice of Africa... May the heaven and the spirits welcome him in peace. Papa Wemba will remain forever in our hearts."



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

'Playing for change — singing for peace'

In February 2014, something memorable and even magical took place in a very unlikely place. The Amani Music Festival in Goma, DRC, shone a bright light on the important role that music and dance can play in creating harmony among neighbors.

A cycle of violence and peace has been the norm for the past 20 years in Goma, located on the Rwandan border. But "Amani" is the Swahili word for "peace." And for the thousands of music lovers from DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi who attended the three-day event, the festival's slogan, "Playing for change — singing for peace," was proof that the future could be better.

The daily online news site, The Root, noted that the festival "amplified the voice and vision

of a rising new generation, with a new approach to fighting for their future. For the young performers, organizers and supporters of the Amani Festival, achieving 'peace' meant achieving unity and reconciliation between the people of the Great Lakes region."

Jean Claude "J.C." Wenga, one of the festival's primary organizers, put it this way: "What we can say about the future of Goma — not only Goma but the whole of DRC and the whole region — is that we have to be united and we are stronger together. If we keep working for unity and speaking the same language, we will build a peaceful society and write a new history together."