

# Republic of the Congo

<b>Capital:</b>	Brazzaville
<b>Religion:</b>	Roman Catholics represent over half of the population (50.5%), followed by Protestants (40.2%). Other religions have marginal share in the society and include: Islam, Animism, Baha'i and others.
<b>Government:</b>	Dominant-party presidential republic. The country has had a multi-party political system since the early 1990s and has held elections since 1992. In practice it is ruled by President Denis Sassou Nguesso and backed by Congolese Labour Party.
<b>Ethnic Groups:</b>	Kongo people – 48%, Sangha -20-%, Teke- 17%, M'Bochi – 12%, European & others -3%. There are approximately 30,000 Pygmies in Congo.
<b>Language:</b>	The official language is French. Other officially recognized languages are: Kongo (or: Kikongo) spoken by Bakongo and Bandundu people and Lingala, the Bantu language spoken by approximately 10 million people in the Central Africa region.
<b>Currency:</b>	The unit of currency is the Central African Franc (XAF). The currency is issued by the Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale (Bank of the Central African States), located in neighbouring Cameroon. The franc is used in six independent states in the region.

- Republic of the Congo (not to be confused with the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo), also known under the name: Congo-Brazzaville, is a country located in Central America, on the Equator, It shares borders with the Central African Republic, Gabon, Cameroon and Cabinda, the Angolan exclave.
- The country was part of the French colony and was then known as French Congo. Upon independence in 1960, it changed its name to: Republic of the Congo. It was a communist single party state between 1979 and 1991. Since 1992, the country holds multiparty democratic elections, but this young

democracy has already experienced a civil war and violations of human rights are common, with indigenous Pygmy people suffering the most.

- Congo's population is concentrated in the South-West region; Congo's population is estimated at over million, over half of which live in the two major cities of Brazzaville and Pointe Noire. The remaining vast areas of tropical jungle in the north are practically inhabited.
- The country industrial sector relies on petroleum support services, followed by forestry. The Republic of Congo also has large deposits of base metal, gold, iron and phosphates. Industrial and commercial activities are concentrated in the urban areas, while several rural economies depend heavily on the governmental support and subsistence.
- The country is a member of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA).

## **Business and Social Etiquette**

- People in Congo are generally friendly and helpful. When talking to them, avoid discussing the politics and the past civil wars, these issues are still sensitive and can antagonise people.
- A handshake is a customary greeting in the Republic of Congo. All business talks are conducted in French. If you don't speak French, bring an interpreter along with you, as there is a lack of professional translators in the country.
- Business attire in Congo is quite formal. Unlike other African countries, where the traditional Boubou is often worn, local business people and governmental officials dress in European style. Business suits are the norm, both for men and women.
- The attitude toward time is very relaxed. This means people are often late for work and your hosts can arrive at a meeting with an hours delay. The more important your host is, the longer you may have to wait.
- Usual office hours are 7am-2pm Monday to Friday and 7am-12.00pm Saturday.
- Business engagements are handled with an informal attitude.
- You can be invited to someone's home for a dinner. If such an invitation is made, it is polite to decline it first but finally accept it. The main meal of the day is eaten in the evening.
- It is considered as impolite to present something to someone with your left hand. Make sure to use either your right hand or both hands.

