

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR AFRICA**



**ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE  
BUREAU REGIONAL DE L'AFRIQUE**

**ORGANIZAÇÃO MUNDIAL DE SAÚDE  
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**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**

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**INFORMATION BULLETIN**  
**ON**  
**THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**



## **THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. The Republic of the Congo is situated in central Africa and its administrative capital is Brazzaville. The Congo covers an area of 342,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is bordered by four countries, namely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the east and south, Cameroon and Central African Republic in the north, and Gabon in the north-west. In the south-west is the Atlantic Ocean. The time zone is one hour ahead of GMT.
2. The population of the Congo is estimated at 2.8 million, with a density of approximately 8.2 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. The country has a growth rate of 2.8% per annum. About 60% of the population lives in urban areas.
3. The Congo has seven principal ethnic groups and 54 subgroups. The principal ones are: the Bacongo, who live in the Brazzaville area and are also prominent among the populations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Angola; the Vili on the Atlantic coast, and the Téké, the M'bochi and the Sangha of the Plateau in the centre and north of the country. The rest are the Maaka and the Kota.
4. French is the official language of the country and there are a number of dialects used by the people, of which the main ones are Lingala, Kituba and Kikongo.

### **THE CLIMATE**

5. The Congo has a tropical climate which varies from humid equatorial in the north to the savannah (with dry season) in the south. The main rainy season is from October to December (with an average rainfall of 292 mm), with a minor rainy season from March to May. In between are the dry seasons from January to February and then again from June to September. The temperature ranges between 20 °C and 30 °C.

### **RELIGION**

6. The people of the Congo belong to a diversity of religious faiths and enjoy freedom of worship. The predominant religion is Christianity (Roman and Orthodox Catholic churches as well as Evangelical churches). Islam is also practised.

### **MEMBERSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

7. The Congo is a member of a number of international organizations which include: the United Nations, the Africa Union, the African Caribbean Pacific Group of States (ACP), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC), the Monetray Union of Central Africa (UMAC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the African Development Bank (ADB), and the Bank for Development of Central African States (BDEAC).

### **TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION**

8. The modes of transportation are road, rail, river and air.
  - There is a road which links Brazzaville in the south-east to Point Noire in the south-west; another main road links Brazzaville to Ouesso in the north of the country.

- The principal artery of the transport network is the railway line which links the Atlantic port of Pointe Noire to Brazzaville where it connects with the river transport services operating on the Congo river and its tributaries. The Congo river is, however, not navigable from Brazzaville to Pointe Noire due to large waterfalls.
- Two international airports are situated in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire. In addition, there are five Class B airports dotted around the country; these are at Dloisie, Nkayi, Owando, Ouessou and Impfondo.

9. While urban transportation is mainly by taxis, there are mini-buses which ply within cities and between the city centre and its suburbs. Car-rental companies are also available.

10. Airline companies currently operating in the Congo are: Lina Congo, CAMAIR, Air France, Air Gabon, TAG, TAC, Aéro-Service, Air Atlantis, InterAir and Ethiopian Airlines. These provide air links with many destinations in Africa and Europe.

11. The National Posts and Telecommunications provide modern forms of communication with the outside world as well as within the country. There are private telephone companies as well, notably Celtel and Libertis, which provide mobile phone services.

12. Mail services are provided by the National Posts and Telecommunications, while courier services are provided by EMS and DHL.

## **ECONOMY**

13. The CFA Franc of Central Africa is the official currency in use. The exchange rate is around CFA 750 to US\$1. The notes are in the denominations of 10,000 F, 5,000 F, 2,000 F, 1,000 F and 500 F. The coins are in the denominations of 500 F, 100 F, 50 F, 25 F, 10 F and 5 F. The banks currently operating in the Congo include BGFIBANK, COFIPA and CAIC.

14. The Congo emerged in 1990 as the sub-Saharan Africa's fourth largest oil producer after Nigeria, Angola and Gabon. The oil output in 1994 was 9.6 million tons. Apart from oil the other natural resource exploited for export is timber, extracted from the huge rainforest that covers about 55% of the country's land area.

15. The Congo has a coastline of 200 km but the fishing industry is small. Agricultural products contribute very little to export earnings though they remain an important source of income for rural communities.

16. As far as mining is concerned, the country has reserves of clay, bituminous sand, potash, phosphate, iron, zinc, lead, gold and diamonds.

## **VISAS AND MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS**

17. With the exception of the nationals of the Member countries of CEMAC, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso, citizens of all other countries are required to have an entry visa which is obtainable either in the embassy of the Congo in the respective country or at the port of entry.

18. Travellers arriving in the Congo are required to possess valid vaccination certificate against yellow fever. It is recommended that people travelling to the Congo should have inoculation against typhoid. For travellers coming from non-malarial zones, it is advisable to take prophylaxis.

## **HOTELS**

19. There are hotels ranging from 3-to-5-star classification in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire. The major hotels are: the Meridien, the Olympic Palace and the Marina in Brazzaville, and the Azur International, the Palm Beach, the Migitel, and the Mbou Mvoumvou in Pointe Noire. Other hotels in Brazzaville are: Exaunel, Phoenix, Opland, Saphir, Bougainvillien and Beausoleil. The room rents of these hotels range from 50,000 CFA to 110,000 CFA. However, there are UN-negotiated rates ranging from 40,000 CFA to 80,000 CFA depending on the type of hotel.

## **RESTAURANTS**

20. There are quite a number of small and big restaurants, especially in Brazzaville, which specialize in African, French, Lebanese and Chinese cuisine. Some of the important restaurants are: La Coupole, Noura, LeNenuphar, La Fougère and Afrique-Antilles.

## **CLOTHING**

21. Clothing and footwear of all types are available for men, women and children. Working clothes for men are usually normal suits, jackets and safari suits. Most women wear their traditional dress.

## **ENTERTAINMENT**

22. Dancing is a popular pastime in the Congo and there are a number of nightclubs in Brazzaville.

## **THE WHO REGIONAL OFFICE AND THE COUNTRY OFFICE**

23. The Regional Office for Africa of the World Health Organization is located in Brazzaville in the suburb of Djoué. The address is: P.O. Box 6, Brazzaville.

Tel: (242) 811 409 or 1 321 95 39100

Fax: (242) 81 39 09 or 1 321 95 39501.

The office is open from 07:00 hrs to 15:00 hrs, Monday through Friday.

24. The office of the WHO Representative (WR) to the Congo is situated in the Old National Laboratory in the centre of the town. The address is: P.O. Box 2465, Brazzaville.

Tel: (242) 81 38 01

Fax: (242) 81 34 47.

The WR's office is open from 08:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs, Monday through Friday.