

General

The Congo is a low-middle income country with one of the highest rates of urbanization in Africa. Two-thirds of the population live within 50 km of the Congo-Ocean railroad linking Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire on the Atlantic coast. The Congo has a relatively well-developed education system. Health standards are also fairly good. More than 55 per cent of the territory is covered by forests; less than 1 per cent of the land is cultivated.

Political and Economic Situation

General Denis Sassou-Nguesso took over the presidency of the Provisional Committee of the Parti Congolais du Travail (PCT) and became president of the Republic, following the ousting of his predecessor Colonel Yhombi Opanjo in 1979. He is now completing his third mandate. In spite of the difficulties the country faced as a result of the structural adjustments initiated by the government, his position remains secure.

The Congo is the fifth-largest petroleum producer in Africa. The other main source of foreign exchange is timber, which accounts for 5 per cent of exports. There are no mining operations in the Congo and the manufacturing sector is insignificant. More than 70 per cent of the country's food is imported.

Foreign Relations

The Congo has good relations with France (Brazzaville was once the administrative capital of French Equatorial Africa), and has signed a 20-year friendship treaty with the U.S.S.R. However, this does not prevent the Congo from developing partnerships with "capitalist" companies to develop its wealth. The president has also promoted diversified international relations and has been actively involved in encouraging a peace settlement in Namibia and Angola.