



Integrated Country Strategy

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Embassy Brazzaville's core priorities, reflected in detail throughout this document, center around strengthened relationships across the breadth of Congolese society, policy priorities in areas where we firmly believe the United States can make progress with Congolese partners, and efforts to improve the Embassy's diversity, efficiency, and internal controls. We are proposing an ambitious effort across U.S. government global objectives because we see opportunities all around us. But we are sufficiently humble to understand that to fully achieve these objectives, we will require not only a focused approach but regular, senior U.S. government engagement, a staffing pattern that matches the core staffing of most Embassies and a continuation of the relative stability that Congo has maintained since 2018.

In American foreign policy circles, the Republic of the Congo frequently gets lost among its neighbors – particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also Central African Republic and Cameroon – because of its relative stability, corruption and governance challenges, and a lack of strong U.S. ties for much of the period since independence in 1960. We have re-enforced that low profile with a limited number of top-level U.S. visitors to Congo throughout the country's history. Our overarching goal under which all other things become more possible is to attract a steady flow of senior American official visitors to Congo to build greater support in a country that is thirsty for the chance to do more with the United States. From progress on support for U.S. positions in international organizations, a commitment to protect and preserve the Congo Basin, to improved security cooperation, transparency and governance, and a health partnership that brings benefits to both countries, there are opportunities for the United States should we choose to pursue them with vigor. Our strengths as a partner are ultimately greater than those of our major competitors and we should continue to play to those strengths and not leave space for those who wish to upset the strides we have made in the Congo-U.S. relationship.

Embassy Brazzaville has laid out an Integrated Country Strategy that maintains focus on the policy doors that are open to us in the ROC. With efforts to protect our environment and mitigate climate change at the top of both U.S. foreign and domestic policy priority lists, we are

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focused on the assistance and policy steps needed to help Congo strengthen its leadership in protecting one of the world's two largest rain forests. At the same time, we know that progress in our partnership with Congo in improved governance, the construction of a more democratic society, and increased commercial transparency will accelerate progress in the environmental arena to the benefit of the United States and Congo. Given Congo's location in an unstable region and its important role in maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, we see a growing security partnership that opens possibilities with the Congolese armed forces. Beyond the extraordinary work being done in the fight against COVID-19 via American assistance in Congo, our health work will continue to seek an improvement in Congolese health systems to support the ongoing battle against malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDs, Ebola, and other diseases that undermine the future for Congo's youth. Finally, with roughly 70% of Congolese citizens below the age of 35, we will continue to invest in upskilling that population in ways that will help support economic diversity and opportunity for decades to come.

Embassy Brazzaville is a small Embassy platform by any measure. Despite its size, the team has recorded major achievements in building up this relationship. That said, no Embassy in the world, particularly in Africa, in which we seek to build a fulsome partnership should be absent a resident Defense Attaché, USAID representative, full management operation including human resources and financial management, CDC representative and levels of staffing in all sections that provide for consistent presence even with 3 RRs in two years and all of the normal life events that occur with any staff. It is unreasonable and ultimately self-defeating to provide just enough staff to start making progress in a relationship but not enough to complete the job. That is particularly true in a place where our adversaries actively pursue the opportunities here and do not hesitate to pursue them with all necessary resources.

Embassy Brazzaville appreciates the opportunity to submit this ICS and very much welcomes a dialogue that results in a platform that can reach the goals described below.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Preserve and Protect Congo's Environment

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** The Government of the Republic of the Congo (GROC) expands existing protected areas to strengthen conservation and sustainable development efforts while securing the forest in areas of the Congo Basin with the highest carbon density.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** The GROC leads regional and international partners to promote sustainable local economic development and alternative livelihoods, improve enforcement in protected areas, and reduce deforestation and forest degradation.

Mission Goal 2: Work in Partnership with Congo to Ensure a Secure, Healthy, and More Democratic Future for Both our Countries

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** The GROC increases capacity of government institutions, private sector, and civil society.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Increase Congolese efforts to combat criminal organizations and transnational crime, as well as trafficking in persons, arms, narcotics, natural resources, and wildlife; enforce customs laws; protect American citizens and combat visa fraud.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** GROC improves the health system's ability to respond to pandemic threats, strengthens outbreak surveillance potential, increases delivery of basic services to its citizens, and seeks to reduce malnutrition.

Mission Goal 3: Increase Mutually Beneficial Growth and Improve the Business Climate

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Congo increases economic activity outside its petroleum sector by increasing exports of priority products and services to the United States while increasing foreign direct investment.

- **Mission Objective 3.2:** GROC improves administration of justice, increases anti-corruption efforts, and reduces impunity and subjective tax and customs enforcement to encourage investment and business growth.

Mission Goal 4: Empower Congolese Youth with 21st Century Skills and Knowledge

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Increase the number of Congolese under the age of 35 with access to English language instruction and other resources, information, and training.

Management Objective 1: Prioritize a work environment that is inclusive, equitable, and open to a diverse range of views and experiences.

Management Objective 2: Improve processes that enhance management controls, increase communication, improve decision making, and ease administrative burdens.

Management Objective 3: Improve professional and technical capacity of staff, to increase service, accountability, and performance.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Preserve and Protect Congo's Environment

Description | Protecting the environment is a shared goal for the U.S. Government and the Congolese Government. Ensuring we do everything necessary to preserve the environment, maintain wild spaces, and fight climate change in ROC is vital for the future of the global community. ROC is home to the third largest parcel of the second largest rainforest in the world, over 100,000 endangered western lowland gorillas and an estimated 20 percent of the forest elephant population on the continent, as well as peatlands that sequester 30 billion tons of carbon. ROC is a regional leader on climate change and environment and prioritization of this work strengthens our bilateral relationship and our combined ability to fight climate change.

Objective 1.1 | The Government of the Republic of the Congo (GROC) expands existing protected areas to strengthen conservation and sustainable development efforts while securing the forest in areas of the Congo Basin with the highest carbon density.

- **Justification** | The Congo Basin is the second lung of the world and occupies a vast swath of central and northern parts of the Republic of the Congo. United States' efforts to preserve, conserve, and study this areas flora and fauna dates back to 1995. The Embassy's continual and deep working relationship with environmental actors and relevant government ministries, along with USAID Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment, will expand protected areas.
- **Linkages** | The President's Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad; Joint Regional Strategy on Africa Goal 1: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade and Investment, Promote Country-Led Development objective 1.3; COP26 Glasgow Leader's Declaration on Forests and Land Use.
- **Risks** | With more international pressure to diversify the economy away from petroleum, developing agriculture, timber, fishing, and mining in an ecologically

sound and carbon neutral way will be essential for preserving the value of the Congo Basin. If ROC does not increase protected areas and their capacity to protect their environmental patrimony, they are at risk of having global competitors of destroying these world environmental assets.

Objective 1.2 | The GROC leads regional and international partners to promote sustainable local green economic development and educate local populations on environmental actions and importance of preservation.

- **Justification** | Seizing on ROC's political will to preserve the environment while sustaining economic growth, U.S. efforts to increase the capacity of Congolese to develop a green economic future is essential. Increasing and magnifying current efforts by the GROC to lead climate policy will lead to a larger direct investment. On a local level, U.S. efforts to increase the knowledge of Congolese about environmental policies, the benefits of tourism, and actions of polluters and bad actors, will increase native agency to enforce national policies at a local level.
- **Linkages** | The Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad; Joint Regional Strategy on Africa Goal 1: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade and Investment, Promote Country-led Development objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and Goal 4: Support Democratic Processes and Promote Strong Democratic Norms objective 4.4; COP26 Glasgow Leader's Declaration on Forests and Land Use.
- **Risks** | Failure to protect the Congo Basin will make it impossible for the world to achieve its goal of limiting global warming. Without direct financial and political support from the United States for sustainable development there is a risk that the need for economic progress will overshadow the need to protect the environment.

Mission Goal 2 | Work in Partnership with Congo to Ensure a Secure, Healthy, and More Democratic Future for Both our Countries

Description | ROC enjoys stability in a region often plagued by conflict, but the country faces deep challenges on democracy, health, and security. Elections in the country fall far short of international standards and nascent civil society is unable to fulfill the balancing role to demand more transparency. Additionally, the health system is weak and unable to deal with chronic health issues nor with potential epidemics. To strengthen our collaborative partnership and support administration goals on democracy, human rights, and governance, Post is committed to ensuring our strategy and bilateral communication prioritizes security, health, and democracy.

Objective 2.1 | The GROC increases capacity of government institutions, private sector, and civil society.

- **Justification |** Congolese elections are not free, fair, or transparent. An increased role for civil society, better educated and participative citizenry, an improved democratic process, and an independent judiciary are essential to Congo's democratic future. The health system in the country is similarly challenged and the future of ROC is dependent on its population being healthy and safe enough to run these institutions.
- **Linkages |** Joint Regional Strategy on Africa Goal 3: Strengthen Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, objectives 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.
- **Risks |** Failing to strengthen these processes puts development strategies at risk and could weaken collaborative partnerships. Current health services lack the capacity to properly serve populations from malnutrition and put them at risk for future epidemics.

Objective 2.2 | Increase Congolese efforts to combat criminal organizations and transnational crime, as well as trafficking in persons, arms, narcotics, natural resources, and wildlife; enforce customs laws; protect American citizens and combat visa fraud.

- **Justification** | Post will engage with the Congolese government on information sharing, training, and in supporting strong democratic institutions to enhance both U.S. and Congolese security. The establishment of stronger institutions that combat criminal organizations, transnational crime, and trafficking in persons, arms, narcotics, natural resources, and wildlife; enforce customs law, and visa fraud is to the interest of the U.S. and Republic of the Congo.
- **Linkages** | Interim National Security Strategic Guidance National Security Priorities; Joint Regional Strategy on Africa Goal 2: Advance Mutual Peace and Security Interests, objectives 2.2 and 2.3.
- **Risks** | Transnational crime will pose a threat to the ROC's national and international security with implications for public safety, public health, government institutions, and economic stability. Transnational crime will also infiltrate state institutions, exacerbate corruption, and threaten the government.

Objective 2.3 | GROC improves the health system's ability to respond to pandemic threats, strengthens outbreak surveillance potential, increases delivery of basic services to its citizens, and seeks to reduce malnutrition.

- **Justification** | According to 2019 WHO Joint External Evaluation Tool ROC scored an average of 1.4 out of 5 on 49 indicators under 19 technical domains. They scored low on indicators including crisis preparedness, training, lab capabilities, disease surveillance, multi sector coordination, antimicrobial resistance surveillance, and financial mechanisms for health crises. The health system is unable to meet chronic or emergency health needs of the population. Throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, United States constant coordination with the Ministry of Health significantly increased good-will between the two countries. Further encouragement and

development of health systems will magnify economic development potential and aid security.

- **Linkages** | Joint Regional Security on Africa Objective 4: Support Democratic Processes and Promote Strong Democratic Norms, objectives 4.1 and 4.3.
- **Risks** | The COVID-19 pandemic had massive impact in ROC from health to the economy, compounding existing challenges from disease, malnutrition, and a failing healthcare system. There is little other progress that we can make with the GROC without addressing the health crises and ensuring that they are prepared for the next crisis.

Mission Goal 3 | Increase Mutually Beneficial Growth and Improve the Business Climate

Description | The business climate in ROC is one of the greatest economic challenges in the country. It makes investment difficult and discourages companies from entering the market. Mutually beneficial economic growth and trade have long been priorities for Post, helping the local economy flourish while providing a space for U.S. companies to settle and grow and strengthening bilateral economic links.

Objective 3.1 | Congo increases economic activity outside its petroleum sector by increasing exports of priority products and services to the United States while increasing foreign direct investment.

- **Justification** | Republic of Congo ranks 180 out of 190 for 2020 World Bank rankings on ease of doing business. The difficulties of starting and running a company in the country compound an economy over-reliant on oil, stifle the private sector, limit innovation, and hamper development.
- **Linkages** | Joint Regional Strategy on Africa Goal 1: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment objectives 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3.

- **Risks** | Congo's overreliance on oil exposes its economy to repeated global shocks. Their external financing agreements with the IMF, World Bank, and French Development Agency are also dependent on sustained economic progress which is at risk without diversification.

Objective 3.2 | GROC improves administration of justice, increases anti-corruption efforts, and reduces impunity and subjective tax and customs enforcement to encourage investment and business growth.

- **Justification** | U.S. companies operating in ROC regularly report ongoing, arbitrary tax and customs fees totaling millions of dollars annually as well as subjective application of legal code against them leading to an astonishing waste of money and time spent battling unfair treatment by the legal system. This discourages new U.S. investment and hampers success of those already established.
- **Linkages** | Interim National Security Strategic Guidance; Joint Regional Strategy on Africa Goal 3: Strengthen Democracy, Human Rights, and Good Governance objective 3.1.
- **Risks** | Without significant change, the barriers to U.S. investment through ill-treatment and barriers to entry, the way is wide open to strategic competitors' investment and interference.

Mission Goal 4 | Empower Congolese Youth with 21st Century Skills and Knowledge

Description | Empowering Congolese youth with 21st century skills such as English is necessary to prepare them to enter the international economy and allow them to reach their full potential. When local youth are empowered to succeed, ROC has a stronger future. This goal aligns Post's efforts with administration priorities to support economic development and good governance on the continent.

Objective 4.1 | Increase the number of Congolese under the age of 35 with access to English language instruction and other resources, information, and training.

- **Justification** | English language skills are imperative for young people to improve their educational and employment prospects, enter the international conversation in their chosen fields of work and study, and to build a brighter future for Congo in the 21st century. It is also important for our cultural sphere of influence as we compete for allies on the African continent. PAS will work with local government and educational institutions, as well as English language program offices in Washington on this goal.
- **Linkages** | Joint Regional Strategy on Africa Goal 4: Support Strong Democratic Processes and Promote Strong Democratic Norms objective 4.2.
- **Risks** | The risk involved in not improving English language capacity in Congolese youth is not only their diminished prospects in a globalized world, but also ceding the initiative to our competitors, namely Russia and China.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Prioritize a work environment that is inclusive, equitable, and open to a diverse range of views and experiences.

- **Justification** | Embassy Brazzaville's employees do not equitably reflect gender and tribal diversity demographics in Congo. Currently, only 8 percent of employees are women. Additionally, ethnic diversity of employees is weighted toward southern tribes. The Embassy will prioritize equity for underserved communities. Through improved practices in hiring, contracting and procurement, employee counseling, development of diversity committees and direct engagement with staff, the Embassy can remove the barriers to equity.
- **Linkages** | The President's Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Throughout the Federal Government.
- **Risks** | Reduced productivity, low morale, and stunted innovation are risks for a lack of diverse culture, thought, and equal opportunity.

Management Objective 2 | Improve processes that enhance management controls, increase communication, improve decision making, and ease administrative burdens.

- **Justification** | Embassy Brazzaville will increase productivity and efficiency, and collection of analytical data. Increased tracking of workload, efficiency rates, and customer satisfaction through set processes the Embassy will better informed of staffing needs and budget management.
- **Linkages:** Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022: Goal 4.2: Provide modern and secure infrastructure and operational capabilities to support effective diplomacy and development.

- **Risks** | Failure to explore and improve data processes as they inform management, hiring, and budgetary decisions could lead to wasted resources, decline in morale, and redundancies of processes.

Management Objective 3 | Improve professional and technical capacity of staff, to increase service, accountability, and performance.

- **Justification** | The full deployment of the Embassy's new warehouse space requires a dramatic change to the amount of and quality of employee trainings. The COVID-19 pandemic interruption of in-person trainings dramatically affected the learning capacity of staff. While adaptations in new technology added the possibility of remote learning, on-site and in-person training will continue to be necessary to ensure staff understand the new systems. A new training space in the warehouse building will provide a crucial step forward for embassy staff capacity and knowledge.
- **Linkages:** Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022 Goal 4.3: Enhance workforce performance, leadership, engagement, and accountability to execute our mission efficiently and effectively.
- **Risks** | If post does not take advantage of increased in-person and virtual trainings, while noting the current health concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing knowledge capacity and ability to maintain and improve the new warehouse facility will not meet demand.