



# 2014 Minerals Yearbook

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## CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)

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# THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)

By James J. Barry

The economy of the Republic of the Congo, also known as Congo (Brazzaville), was based primarily on the production of crude oil, which in 2014 was estimated to account for about 59% of the gross domestic product (GDP). In 2014, the oil industry accounted for about 72% of Government revenue and 81% of exports. International interest in the development of the nonfuel mineral resources of Congo (Brazzaville) had increased in recent years, and much of the focus of multinational mining companies was on the country's gold, iron ore, limestone, and potash resources (Service Économique de Brazzaville, 2015; International Monetary Fund, 2014, p. 20–21).

## Minerals in the National Economy

In 2014, the real GDP in Congo (Brazzaville) was \$9.3 billion, which was a 6.8% increase from that of 2013. Economic growth was largely attributed to the oil industry, which accounted for about \$5.5 billion of the total GDP. The mineral sector is under the jurisdiction of the Ministère des Mines et de la Géologie. Mining is regulated by the Code Minier (law No. 4–2005), which requires that a Congolese-based company operate under mining (exploitation) licenses. Article 100 of the code entitles the Government to a free (carried) equity interest of not less than 10% in mining operations. Decree No. 2007–274 sets the conditions for prospecting, exploration, and exploitation of minerals, and Decree No. 2007–293 addresses quarrying issues. The Ministère des Hydrocarbures oversees activity in the hydrocarbon sector. The sector is regulated by the Code des Hydrocarbures (law No. 24–1994). Procedures for awarding oil and gas exploitation licenses are set out in Decree No. 2008–15. The Ministère du Tourisme et de l'Environnement reviews environmental assessments of mineral development projects. Congo (Brazzaville) was a participant in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), and in 2013, became a compliant country of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2013, p. 2; World Bank Group, The, 2016).

## Production

Most of Congo (Brazzaville)'s hydrocarbons were produced from offshore fields, and in 2014, the amount of natural gas produced, which was flared, was reduced by 56% compared with that of 2013. According to BP p.l.c., Congo (Brazzaville) accounted for 3.4% of the volume of crude oil production among African crude oil producers in 2014. Estimates of crude oil production in Congo (Brazzaville) for 2014 by BP p.l.c. were higher than the data reported by the Ministère des Hydrocarbures (BP p.l.c., 2015, p. 8).

Cement production was estimated to have increased by 84% in 2014, with the first full year of production from of the FORSPAK International Congo S.A.R.L. plant at Dolisie. Diamond production statistics obtained from the

KPCS indicated that output decreased by about 6% in 2014 compared with that of 2013 (table 1; BP p.l.c., 2015, p. 8; Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, 2015; Ministère des Hydrocarbures, 2015).

## Structure of the Mineral Industry

Artisanal miners dominated the diamond and gold mining sectors. Small-scale domestic operations quarried construction materials, such as gravel, sand, and stone. Multinational cement companies have started to develop the country's limestone resources, and international construction companies have obtained a number of quarrying permits for sand and stone to support infrastructure construction projects. About 70 mining companies were exploring or prospecting for nonfuel minerals in Congo (Brazzaville). Much of the international mining companies' exploration activity was for gold, iron ore, and potash (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2013, p. 2).

State-owned Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC) manages the Government's interest in petroleum production and refining and natural gas production and processing. International oil companies operated many of the oilfields (table 2).

## Commodity Review

### Metals

**Copper.**—In 2014, Handa Copper Corporation (HCC) of Canada acquired a 20% interest in Renaissance Copper S.A.R.L. (Renaissance) and Nirvana Resources S.A.R.L. (Nirvana) both of Congo (Brazzaville). Mining research permits were held by Renaissance for the Maboudou project in the Niari Department and by Nirvana for the Banda-Kayes project in the Bouenza Department. Under the acquisition agreement, Handa would have the opportunity to earn a 100% interest in both companies. Under the initial option, Handa would obtain a 20% interest with a \$200,000 payment. For the second option, an additional payment of \$200,000 coupled with proving inferred copper resources within the first 32 months of the permit would garner another 31% interest. To obtain the final 49%, Handa must have completed a bankable feasibility study within 2 years of obtaining the second option, obtained mining permits, and made a cash payment of \$3,000,000. Handa had begun exploration programs for both project areas in 2014 (Marketwired, 2014; MSA Group, The, 2014, p. 2).

**Iron Ore.**—Iron ore exploration took place primarily in the Invindo Massif area, which is located in the Departments of Cuvette-Ouest and Sangha in northwestern Congo (Brazzaville), and in the Massif du Chaillu area, which is located in the Departments of Lekoumou and Niari in southwestern Congo (Brazzaville).

In 2014, the Government acquired a 15% interest in Avima Fer SA, which owned the Avima iron ore project.

In 2013, Core Mining Congo S.A.R.L., which was a subsidiary of Core Mining Ltd. of the United Kingdom, received a mining license for the Avima project in Sangha Department. Core Mining planned to begin iron ore production by 2016 at a rate of about 35 million metric tons per year (Mt/yr) of direct shipping ore. The ore would be trucked to the Ogooué River at Booue, Gabon, and then barged to Port Gentil, Gabon, for shipment overseas (Core Mining Ltd., 2013, 2014, undated).

In January 2014, Exxaro Resources Ltd. of South Africa signed a mining convention and port and rail access agreements with the Government for the estimated 2-Mt/yr Mayoko-Lekoumou project. In mid-2014, however, the project, which is located in the Niari Department and included the Lekoumou, the Mayoko, and the Ngoubou-Ngoubou iron ore prospects, was impaired owing to low iron ore prices, high capital expenditures, and minimal progress on finalizing outstanding agreements with the Government. In April 2014, the Ngongo exploration permit was granted for 3 years and was twice renewable for an additional 2 years each. The Ngongo exploration site is located north of Lekoumou Department (Exxaro Resources Ltd., 2015, p. 7, 63, 100).

In 2012, Equatorial Resources Ltd. of Australia completed an environmental and social impact assessment, and in 2013, a mineral resource estimate and a scoping study for the Mayoko-Moussondji project in southwestern Congo (Brazzaville). In March 2014, Equatorial Resources was awarded a mining license for the 615.5-square-kilometer-(km<sup>2</sup>) project area. The 25-year license was renewable for an additional 15 years. In December, Equatorial Resources and the Government signed a mining convention that included guaranteed access to state-owned rail and port facilities. Equatorial Resources was also granted a three-tiered tax rate. For the first 5 years, the company's production was tax free; for the next 5 years, the rate would be one-half of the maximum corporate rate or 7.5%; thereafter (that is, for the remaining life of the mine), the company would pay the full rate of 15%. In November, the results of a prefeasibility study estimated annual production of 2.5 Mt/yr to commence in 15 to 18 months. Total indicated and inferred resources were 917 million metric tons (Mt) at a grade of 31.4% iron. Equatorial Resources began an options study for its Badondo iron project in the northwest region. The exploration target for Badondo was between 370 and 620 Mt at a grade of between 35% and 67% iron (Equatorial Resources Ltd., 2015a, p. 1, 3, 8; 2015b).

Mining Projects Development Congo S.A. (MPD Congo), which was a subsidiary of the joint venture of Glencore plc of Switzerland and Zanaga Iron Ore Company Ltd. of the United Kingdom, continued work on the Zanaga iron ore project, which is located about 300 kilometers (km) northeast of Pointe Noire in Lekoumou Department. MPD Congo completed a feasibility study for the project in March 2014. From the study, the initial stage would produce 12 Mt/yr of iron ore pellet feed, and a second stage expansion would add an additional 18 Mt/yr. In August a mining license was granted and the Government signed a mining convention (Zanaga Iron Ore Co. Ltd., 2015, p. 4, 8, 45).

In 2013, Sundance Resources Ltd. of Australia was issued a mining license for the Nabeba prospect portion of the

Mbalam-Nabeba iron ore project, which consisted of the Mbalam prospect in Cameroon and the Nabeba prospect in Sangha Department, Congo (Brazzaville). In July 2014, a mining convention was signed by the Government. The project was expected to have a production capacity of 35 Mt/yr with iron ore production starting in the second half of 2019 (Sundance Resources Ltd., 2014, p. 1, 4, 76).

### *Industrial Minerals*

**Cement.**—In 2014, Société Nouvelle des Ciments du Congo (SONOCC) continued work on the expansion of the Loutete plant to 300,000 metric tons per year (t/yr) of capacity from about 120,000 t/yr. SONOCC expected to begin production midyear 2015. In November 2013, FORSPAK International Congo S.A.R.L. started production from its 280,000-t/yr-capacity cement plant at Dolisie and planned to increase capacity by another 200,000 t/yr (Lubabu M.K., 2014; Zaou, 2015).

In 2014, Dangote Group of Nigeria completed the construction of a 1.5-Mt/yr-capacity cement plant at Madingou, which is located about 139 km from Brazzaville. Although production has not yet commenced, Dangote planned to expand production at Madingou by 1.5 Mt/yr and to make the plant fully operational by 2016. Diamond Cement Congo S.A., which was a subsidiary of West African Cement S.A. of Ghana, was building a 600,000-t/yr-capacity cement plant at Mindouli with the ability to expand to 1 Mt/yr. Initial production was scheduled to begin in early 2015. In May, Ciments de l'Afrique of Morocco began construction of a planned 500,000-t/yr-capacity cement plant in Kouilou. Production was expected to begin in 2015, and Ciments de l'Afrique planned to double capacity by 2016 (Cemnet, 2014; Lubabu, 2014; Dangote Cement Plc., 2015, p. 5, 18).

**Phosphate Rock.**—Cominco Resources S.A., which was a subsidiary of Cominco Resources Ltd. of the United Kingdom, continued work on the development of a mine near Hinda, which is located about 37 km northeast of Pointe Noire. A 2013 prefeasibility study estimated that the Hinda project's ore reserves were 433 Mt at a grade of 10.6% phosphorus pentoxide (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>). The study also projected a 26-year mine life, with the phosphate rock output of 4 Mt/yr upgraded to 32% P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>. Cominco initiated a definitive feasibility study of the Hinda project in 2014, with expected completion of the study in early 2015. Initial production could begin as soon as 2016 (Cominco Resources Ltd., 2014, p. 18, 37; 2015).

**Potash.**—In 2013, MagIndustries Corp. of Canada secured financing for the development of the Mengo potash project and signed a number of construction and engineering contracts toward construction of a processing facility. MagIndustries started clearing and leveling the plant site for the proposed 1.2-Mt/yr-capacity processing facility. Initial production could begin as soon as 2016, subject to the availability of financing (MagIndustries Corp., 2014a, p. 2; 2014b, p. 1–5).

Elemental Minerals Ltd. of Australia held a 97% equity interest in the Sintoukola potash project, which is located about 55 km northwest of Pointe Noire. In 2014, seismic and sampling surveys were initiated for the Dougu and Kola deposits and exploratory drilling was performed in the Yangala prospect.

The project's exploration license was expected to be renewed in early 2015 (Elemental Minerals Ltd., 2015, p. 4, 5, 7, 9).

African Potash Ltd. of Guernsey began an exploration program for the 720.5-km<sup>2</sup> Lake Dinga potash project in the Kouilou region where African Potash had a 70% interest in the exploration permit holder, Société des Potasses et des Mines S.A. Holle Potash Corp. of Canada, through its subsidiary Afrimines S.A., was in the process of initiating a feasibility study covered under its Tchitondi and Manega exploration licenses. Afrimines hoped to begin producing 1.2 Mt/yr of potash by 2016 (Holle Potash Corp., 2014; African Potash Ltd., 2015, p. 1–2).

### **Mineral Fuels**

**Petroleum.**—Congorep, which was a joint venture between Perenco of Singapore (51%) and SNPC (49%), had record production of 32,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) of crude oil at the Likouala offshore oilfield. The increase was nearly six times the production from just 4 years prior and attributed to a successful drilling campaign initiated in 2012. At yearend, Eni Sp.A. of Italy began producing 7,500 bbl/d at the Néné discovery in Block Marin XII. At full production, Eni expected production to be more than 120,000 bbl/d (Eni Sp.A., 2015; Perenco, 2016).

A decision to develop the Lianzi offshore field was approved in July 2012. The Governments of Angola and Congo (Brazzaville) previously had agreed to jointly develop the oilfield, which straddled their international borders. A four-producing-well, three-water-injector-well development program was planned. The wells were to be connected to an existing offshore production platform on Block 14 in Angola, which was operated by Cabinda Gulf Oil Company Ltd. In 2014, construction and drilling programs were underway, with initial production expected by 2015; the output was expected to be about 46,000 bbl/d (Chevron Corp., 2013, p. 14; 2015, p. 12).

### **Outlook**

Despite the continued decrease in production from mature oilfields, the petroleum sector is expected to remain the cornerstone of Congo (Brazzaville)'s economy for the short-term partially owing to new deepwater oilfields coming onstream and adding to overall production. Crude oil output was expected to peak at about 350,000 bbl/d in 2017. Multinational cement companies have begun to develop the country's limestone resources to increase production of cement. Congo (Brazzaville)'s cement production capacity is expected to increase significantly in the next 3 to 4 years, and the country is likely to become a cement exporter. Development of iron ore deposits and the redevelopment of coastal potash deposits are expected to lead to further diversification of the national economy and to begin to reduce the country's dependence on petroleum. The decrease in iron ore and potash prices in 2013, however, is expected to slow the advance of the progress of the iron ore and potash projects (Stringer, 2014; Bouiti-Viaudo, 2015).

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TABLE 1  
CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE): PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES<sup>1</sup>

Commodity <sup>2</sup>		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Cement	metric tons	80,000 <sup>e</sup>	70,000 <sup>e</sup>	150,000	250,000 <sup>r</sup>	460,000 <sup>e</sup>
Diamond	carats	381,242	76,548	51,588	56,495	53,163
Gold, mine output, Au content <sup>e</sup>	kilograms	150	150	150	150	150
Natural gas, gross	thousand cubic meters	103,371	151,091	218,521	226,188	226,610
Petroleum:						
Crude oil	do.	107,000	108,000	99,000	88,338	91,522
Refinery products:						
Natural gas liquids	do.	2,954 <sup>r</sup>	3,203 <sup>r</sup>	4,638 <sup>r</sup>	4,857 <sup>r</sup>	4,888
Naphtha	do.	0	58 <sup>r</sup>	83 <sup>r</sup>	83 <sup>r</sup>	83
Liquid petroleum gas	do.	139 <sup>r</sup>	81 <sup>r</sup>	116 <sup>r</sup>	116 <sup>r</sup>	116
Motor gasoline	do.	836 <sup>r</sup>	802 <sup>r</sup>	1,160 <sup>r</sup>	1,211 <sup>r</sup>	1,280
Jet kerosene	do.	373 <sup>r</sup>	309 <sup>r</sup>	452 <sup>r</sup>	476 <sup>r</sup>	492
Kerosene	do.	263 <sup>r</sup>	170 <sup>r</sup>	247 <sup>r</sup>	263 <sup>r</sup>	271
Diesel	do.	1,628 <sup>r</sup>	1,424 <sup>r</sup>	2,066 <sup>r</sup>	2,161 <sup>r</sup>	2,190
Fuel oil	do.	1,693 <sup>r</sup>	1,470 <sup>r</sup>	2,126 <sup>r</sup>	2,223 <sup>r</sup>	2,313
Total	do.	7,886 <sup>r</sup>	7,517 <sup>r</sup>	10,889 <sup>r</sup>	11,389 <sup>r</sup>	11,631

<sup>1</sup>Estimated; estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits. <sup>r</sup>Revised. do. Ditto.

<sup>1</sup>Table includes data available through December 15, 2015.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to the commodities listed, copper ore, crude construction materials (such as clay, sand and gravel, and stone), lead ore, lime, limestone for cement, and zinc ore were produced, but available information was inadequate to make reliable estimates of output.

TABLE 2  
CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE): STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 2014

(Thousand 42-gallon barrels unless otherwise specified)

Commodity		Major operating companies and and major equity owners	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity <sup>c</sup>
Cement	metric tons	FORSPAK International Congo S.A.R.L.	Dolisie	280,000
Do.	do.	Société Nouvelle des Ciments du Congo (SONOCC) (Société National Chinoise des Travaux des Ponts et Chaussées, 56%, and Government, 44%)	Loutete	120,000
Copper		Société de Recherche et d'Exploitation Minière S.A. (SOREMI) (Gerald Metals, Inc., 90%, and Government, 10%)	Grande Mines, Boko Songo	NA
Diamond	carats	Artisanal production	Kouilou, Lekoumou, Likouala, Niari, and West Cuvette Departments	400,000
Gold	kilograms	do.	Various locations	150
Liquefied petroleum gas		Total Exploration & Production Congo, 53.5%; Chevron Overseas (Congo) Ltd., 31.5%; Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC), 15%	Nkossa platform, offshore	3,000
Petroleum:				
Crude		Eni Congo S.A., 90%	Awa/Paloukou field, offshore	4,000
Do.		Murphy Oil Corp., 50%; PA Resources AB, 35%; Société Nationale de Recherche et d'Exploration Pétrolière (SNPC), 15%	Azurite field, offshore	(1)
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 50%, and Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC), 50%	Djambala field, offshore	7,300
Do.		do.	Foukanda, and Mwafi fields, offshore	NA
Do.		Congorep [Perenco Group, 51%, and Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC), 49%]	Emeraude field, offshore	8,000
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 100%	Ikalou/Ikalou Sud fields, offshore	3,000
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 52%, and Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC), 48%	Kitina field, offshore	15,000
Do.		Total Exploration & Production Congo, 65%, and Eni Congo S.A., 35%	Kombi, Libondo, Likalala Tchibeli, and Tchibouela fields, offshore	25,000
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 75%	Kouakouala field, onshore	NA
Do.		Congorep [joint venture of Perenco Group, 51%, and Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo, 65%, (SNPC), 49%] and Eni Congo S.A., 35%	Likouala field, offshore	11,700
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 42.5%, and Total Exploration & Production Congo, 47.5%	Loango field, offshore	6,500
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 100%	Loufika and Zingali fields, onshore	NA
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 83%; and Tullow Oil plc, 11%	M'Boundi field, onshore	20,000
Do.		Total Exploration & Production Congo, 53.5%; Chevron Overseas (Congo) Ltd., 31.5%; Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC), 15%	Moho-Bilondo field, offshore	32,000
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 65%	Nené field, offshore	2,700
Do.		do.	Nkossa and Nsoko fields, offshore	18,000
Do.		Total Exploration & Production Congo, 55.25%; Eni Congo S.A., 29.75%; Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC), 15%	Sendji and Yanga fields, offshore	9,500
Do.		Total Exploration & Production Congo, 65%, and Eni Congo S.A., 35%	Tchendo field, offshore	3,000
Do.		CMS NOMEKO Congo [Société Nationale de Recherche et d'Exploration Pétrolière, 50%; Perenco Group, 25%; Nuevo Congo Co., 18.75%; Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Co. (K.S.C.), 6.25%]	Yombo field, offshore	3,600
Do.		Eni Congo S.A., 56%, and Total Exploration & Production Congo, 44%	Zatchi field, offshore	7,600
Refined products		Congolaise de Raffinage (CORAF) [Société Nationale des Pétroles du Congo (SNPC), 100%]	Pointe Noire	7,600

<sup>c</sup>Estimated; estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits. Do., do. Ditto. NA Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Production ceased in 2013. Field abandonment underway.