

**DRC 2006 ELECTIONS****COUNTRY FACT SHEET  
JULY 2006****Official name**

- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

**Capital**

- Kinshasa

**Population**

- Estimated at about 58 million (2005)

**Recent history**

- A former Belgian colony, the DRC became independent in 1960. Mobutu Sese Sekou took power after a 1965 coup d'état and renamed the country Zaire in 1971. He was forced out of power when a rebellion led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila toppled his government in May 1997. President Kabila changed the country's name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ruled until he was killed in January 2001. His son Joseph Kabila took over the presidency and has been the head of state since then.
- More than 3.8 million people have died as a result of fighting, disease and malnutrition. About 3.4 million people have been internally displaced since 1998, when conflict involving half a dozen countries erupted in the region.
- The signing of a power-sharing Global and All-Inclusive Agreement in South Africa in December 2003 led to a transitional government and a successful constitutional referendum in December 2005. The elections on 30 July 2006 will determine the presidency and the composition of the national assembly.

**Country size**

- DRC covers an area of 2.34 million square kilometers, making it Africa's third largest country.
- DRC's size is comparable to that of Western Europe - with a surface equivalent to the combined size of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.
- DRC shares borders with nine different countries (Angola, Burundi, Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia).

**DRC's geography and natural wealth**

- DRC is situated at the heart of the west-central portion of sub-Saharan Africa.
- Natural resources include copper, coltan, industrial diamonds, cobalt, petroleum, gold, silver, zinc and other base metals. DRC is among the top 10 countries worldwide in terms of production of gold, industrial diamonds, copper, cobalt and coltan (a material used in cell phones).
- DRC is endowed with 50 percent of all the tropical hardwoods in Africa; it is home to the second largest rainforest in the world and one of the world's mightiest river systems, as well as having many of the world's endangered animal species. The Congo river system has 10-12 percent of the world's potential hydroelectric capacity.

**Economy**

- DRC ranks 167 out of 177 countries in the 2003 UNDP Human Development Report with an average life expectancy of 43.1 years.