30 October 2026

TRADE POLICY REVIEW OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

28 AND 30 OCTOBER 2026

Concluding Remarks by the Chairperson
Ambassador H.E. Ms Nella Pepe Tavita-Levy
(Permanent Representative of Samoa)

1. This third Trade Policy Review of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has provided Members with a valuable opportunity to deepen their understanding of developments in the country's trade and investment policies since its previous Review in 2016. This exercise has benefited from the constructive engagement of the DRC delegation, led by **the Minister of Foreign Trade, H.E. Mr Julien Paluku Kahongya**, the insightful remarks of our discussant, **Ambassador H.E. Mr Zniber (Morocco)**, and the contributions of 26 delegations that took the floor. These exchanges have allowed Members to recognize the progress achieved by the DRC, while identifying areas where further reforms could contribute to a more transparent and predictable trade regime and a more diversified and inclusive economy.

2. Members commended the DRC for its relatively strong economic performance despite significant domestic and external challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and security-related pressures. Real GDP growth averaged 5.4% between 2016 and 2024, supported mainly by the expansion of mining production and favourable international commodity prices. Members nevertheless observed that this growth has not translated sufficiently into broad-based improvements in living standards. They highlighted the economy's continued dependence on the extractive sector, which accounts for more than 90% of merchandise exports, and encouraged the authorities to accelerate economic diversification, promote employment and strengthen the contribution of trade to poverty reduction.

3. Members recognized the DRC's considerable economic potential, particularly its abundant mineral resources and opportunities for developing higher-value-added activities. At the same time, they noted that persistent electricity shortages, inadequate transport infrastructure, limited access to finance and the predominance of informal economic activities continue to constrain private investment and productive development. Members welcomed the authorities' efforts to improve the business environment and promote industrialization, while encouraging further reforms to enhance legal certainty, simplify administrative procedures, strengthen governance and create more favourable conditions for domestic and foreign investment.

4. Turning to the DRC's participation in the multilateral trading system, Members welcomed the ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies in July 2025. They considered these important steps towards strengthening the country's engagement with the WTO. Nevertheless, several delegations expressed concern about persistent gaps in the notification of trade-related measures and encouraged the DRC to improve its compliance with WTO transparency obligations. Members also underscored the importance of strengthening institutional capacity and encouraged the authorities to make full use of available technical assistance to support the implementation of WTO agreements and commitments.

5. Members took note of the DRC's participation in several regional integration initiatives, including COMESA, SADC, ECCAS, the East African Community and the African Continental Free Trade Area. While recognizing the opportunities offered by these arrangements to expand trade and strengthen regional value chains, several delegations expressed concern that preferential tariff commitments have yet to be effectively implemented. They encouraged the authorities to clarify the implementation timetable, operationalize preferential rules of origin and ensure greater coherence among the country's overlapping regional trade commitments.

6. Several Members raised concerns regarding the complexity of the DRC's taxation system and the numerous duties and charges imposed on imports. They noted that, although the average applied

WTO - Internal

MFN tariff has remained broadly unchanged, at 11.3% in 2026, additional border charges and administrative requirements continue to increase trade costs. Members encouraged the authorities to rationalize these charges, improve the transparency and administration of customs and fiscal exemptions, and simplify import and export procedures. They also welcomed efforts to modernize customs administration, including the deployment of ASYCUDA World and the development of the electronic single window, while calling for further progress in reducing border delays and facilitating trade.

7. The business and investment environment attracted considerable attention during the Review. Members acknowledged initiatives to simplify administrative procedures and promote private-sector development, but encouraged the DRC to address remaining obstacles related to regulatory complexity, legal uncertainty and access to finance. Several delegations sought further clarification on the effectiveness of investment incentives, the governance and transparency of state-owned enterprises, and measures to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Members also highlighted the importance of women's economic participation and the formalization of economic activities in fostering more inclusive growth.

8. Members also discussed a range of regulatory issues affecting trade and investment. These included the administration of import and export restrictions, competition and price controls, government procurement, technical regulations, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures. Several delegations encouraged the authorities to strengthen regulatory transparency, improve coordination among the institutions responsible for implementing trade-related measures and ensure that applicable requirements are administered in a predictable manner. Intellectual property protection also attracted attention, with Members seeking further progress in modernizing the legal framework and strengthening enforcement.

9. The mining sector featured prominently in Members' interventions, reflecting the DRC's strategic position as a major supplier of critical minerals, particularly copper and cobalt. Members recognized the opportunities associated with the country's efforts to develop domestic mineral processing and participate in battery and electric vehicle value chains. At the same time, several delegations raised questions concerning export restrictions, mineral traceability, investment partnerships and the governance of the sector. Members encouraged the authorities to pursue policies that promote value addition, transparency and responsible mineral sourcing, while ensuring that the benefits of mining contribute more broadly to employment, local development and economic diversification.

10. Turning to other sectoral policies, Members highlighted the importance of improving agricultural productivity and food security, strengthening sustainable forestry management and addressing the country's substantial infrastructure and energy needs. Several delegations recognized the DRC's considerable renewable energy potential and encouraged efforts to expand access to reliable and affordable electricity. Members also expressed interest in developments in telecommunications, digital trade and financial services, emphasizing their potential contribution to private-sector development, economic diversification and greater participation in regional and global markets.

11. The DRC received 189 advance written questions from 14 delegations, of which 125 were received before the deadline and 64 after, reflecting the considerable interest in its trade and investment regime. I would like to thank the delegations for their active engagement and the DRC authorities for their participation in this exercise. The DRC had provided written replies to 181 questions before the meeting. I encourage the DRC to provide comprehensive responses to all outstanding questions within the established timeframe, as these exchanges constitute an essential element of the transparency and peer-review functions of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism.

12. In concluding, I believe this Review has highlighted both the DRC's considerable economic potential and the importance of addressing the structural and institutional constraints that continue to limit its development. Members have recognized the country's economic achievements and progress in trade-related reforms, while encouraging further efforts to diversify production and exports, reduce trade costs, improve infrastructure, strengthen regulatory transparency and fulfil its multilateral and regional commitments. I hope that the observations and recommendations made during this Review will provide useful inputs into the DRC's ongoing reform agenda and help strengthen the contribution of trade to sustainable and inclusive economic development.

13. Finally, I would like to thank the DRC delegation, our discussant, the participating delegations and the Secretariat for their valuable contributions to this exercise and congratulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the successful conduct of its third Trade Policy Review.