Country Guide (IAM)

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

This guide is compiled from the IAM Country Guide for reference only. Customs regulations change frequently; please consult your Seapoe relocation consultant for the latest requirements before shipping.

Updated 2026-09-05

Documents

Documents required for importing used household goods, personal effects, and related shipments.

For Corporate Clients (Foreign Expatriates)

- Copy of valid passport (including pages showing name, visa, and DGM entry stamp)
- Detailed inventory in French, dated, valued, and signed by the shipper
- Original certificate of change of residence
- Work card
- First settlement certificate (Attestation de Première Installation, issued by DGM in the DRC)
- Service certificate or employment contract (supplied by the employer)
- Settlement visa (supplied by DGM in the DRC)
- Tax number (obtained from the Finance Ministry)

For NGO Personnel

- Copy of valid passport (including visa and DGM entry stamp)
- Detailed inventory in French, dated, valued, and signed by the shipper
- Framework contract (agreement between the government and the NGO specifying that the NGO can import personal effects)
- Ministerial agreement (between the relevant Ministry and the NGO, renewable every two years, specifying that the NGO can import personal effects)
- Ordinary settlement visa
- First settlement attestation (issued by DGM)
- Service certificate or employment contract
- Tax number (from Finance Ministry)

For Diplomats

- Copy of valid passport (including visa and DGM entry stamp)
- Detailed inventory in French, dated, valued, and signed by the shipper
- Service certificate or employment contract
- Diplomatic visa
- Tax number of the Embassy
- VAT number of the Embassy

For Returning Congolese Citizens

- Copy of valid passport (including visa and DGM entry stamp). The original passport must be presented at Customs during clearance.
- Detailed inventory in French, dated, valued, and signed by the shipper
- Original certificate of change of residence issued by the DRC embassy in the country of

origin
- End of service certificate issued by the employer at origin

Specific Information

BIVAC pre-shipment inspection: If the declared value of items exceeds USD 2,500, a BIVAC (Bureau Veritas) inspection request is required. Without a BIVAC certificate, a fine of 100% of customs duties is imposed on top of the duties and taxes.

Personal property (including motor vehicles) imported by returning DRC residents is exempt from pre-shipment inspections per Trade.gov.

Document lead time: All original documents must reach the destination agent at least 15 days before the shipment's arrival for sea shipments, and 7 days for air shipments.

All shipments (air and sea) are generally subject to customs inspection.

DRC tariff structure: Three bands apply: 5% for equipment/raw materials; 10% for consumer food/industrial inputs/spare parts; 20% for clothing, furniture, cigarettes, finished products. Additional levies include: administrative fee (2% CIF), OCC fee (1.5% CIF), OGEFREM (0.58% CIF), FPI (2% CIF), BIVAC inspection fee (1.5% FOB). VAT is 16%.

GUICE electronic platform: All pre-customs clearances for imports, exports, and transit of goods at pilot sites in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Matadi, Goma, Boma, and Kisangani must be performed electronically via https://segucerdc.com/.

Sydonia World: The customs software system covers most customs offices and has reduced clearance times, though implementation remains incomplete across the country.

Currency: Congolese Franc (CDF). The U.S. dollar is widely used in parallel.

Language: French is the official language. All customs documentation must be in French.

Duties & Taxes

Duty exemption for corporate clients, NGOs, and returning Congolese citizens: Personal effects and one vehicle may be imported exempt from duties and taxes if they arrive within 6 months of the shipper's arrival in the DRC. After 6 months, both personal effects and vehicle are treated as commercial imports subject to full duties and taxes.

Import tax on exempt shipments: Even when exempt from duties, a 1% tax on CIF value applies for corporate clients, NGOs, and returning Congolese citizens. Diplomats pay 0.1%.

Non-exempt shipments: If the shipment does not qualify for exemption, or if the required documents cannot be provided, customs duties and taxes total approximately 48% of FOB value.

Shipment limits:

- Corporate clients and NGOs: one small air shipment (less than 4 cbm) and one sea shipment may be exempted. Two air shipments or two sea shipments will not both be exempted.
- Returning Congolese citizens: only one sea OR one air shipment is allowed.

Food, alcohol, cleaning products: Cannot be exempted from duties and taxes and will be treated as merchandise. Only diplomats are exempted on these categories.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Firearms and ammunition PERMIT REQUIRED
- Unlawful drugs
- Counterfeit goods
- Products from endangered species without CITES documentation CITES

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Items always subject to duties within household goods (even for exempt shipments):

- Food
- Alcohol (all alcohol is subject to import duties and taxes; only diplomats are exempt)
- Cleaning products
- Any items deemed commercial in nature

Traveler's duty-free allowances: Contact the destination agent for current personal baggage allowances.

Pre-shipment inspection required: For all imports valued at USD 2,500 FOB or more (via BIVAC). Without a BIVAC certificate, a 100% fine on customs duties applies.

Consignment Instructions

Recommended: Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially regarding the 6-month exemption window and BIVAC requirements.

6-month exemption window is critical. If the shipment does not arrive within 6 months of the shipper's arrival, it loses exempt status entirely and is treated as a commercial import at approximately 48% FOB. This is the single most important deadline.

Vehicle must accompany personal effects. A vehicle shipped alone will not receive the duty exemption. It must be part of the same import as the household goods.

Document lead time: 15 days for sea, 7 days for air. Late documents mean late clearance and additional storage charges.

French-language inventory required: Detailed, valued, dated, and signed by the shipper in French.

Ports of entry: The primary sea port is Matadi (on the Congo River, approximately 350 km from Kinshasa). Air freight arrives at N'djili International Airport (FIH) in Kinshasa. Other major entry points include Lubumbashi (for shipments from southern Africa via Zambia), Goma, and Kisangani.

Transit from Matadi to Kinshasa: Overland road transport, approximately 350 km. Road conditions vary; allow additional time.

Security environment: The U.S. State Department issues a Level 3 (Reconsider Travel) advisory for the DRC, with Level 4 (Do Not Travel) for North and South Kivu provinces due to armed conflict, terrorism, and kidnapping. Security conditions directly affect logistics in eastern DRC.

Airport departure fees: All departing international travelers must pay official fees when checking in (approximately $55 for international flights, $10 for domestic). Unofficial "fee" demands from immigration and security personnel have been reported.

Corruption risk: The DRC remains a challenging customs environment. Unofficial demands for payments, delays, and arbitrary interpretations of regulations are documented risks. The destination agent's local relationships and experience are essential.