Country Guide (IAM)

Republic of the Congo

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.

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Documents

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

Required Documents

Note: Document requirements differ for diplomatic shipments. Diplomats should work through their embassy to obtain the necessary exemption documentation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- Copy of passport
- Packing list
- Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)
- Detailed inventory in French, valued, and signed by the owner of the goods
- Original detailed inventory of new items purchased less than 6 months prior to import, with original invoices attached
- Work permit or employment contract
- Residence permit or visa

Specific Information

Pre-shipment inspection: NOT required for personal effects shipments or secondhand vehicles. However, pre-shipment inspection IS required for brand-new vehicle shipments (including diplomatic vehicles). COTECNA is the designated inspection company. Contact COTECNA in the origin country to schedule the inspection.

CEMAC framework: The Republic of the Congo is a CEMAC member state (with Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon). Import duties range from 5% to 30% on CIF value. Additional CEMAC-related taxes include: CEMAC integration tax (1% CIF), African integration contribution (0.2% CIF), statistic tax (0.2% CIF), OHADA contribution (0.05% CIF), CEEAC contribution (0.04% CIF).

Computer royalty: An additional tax at rates from 0.5% to 2% applies to all importation and exportation of goods to cover customs IT processing costs. Exemptions apply for donations, embassy imports, and NGOs covered by a headquarters agreement.

Currency: CFA Franc BEAC (XAF), pegged to the Euro at 1 EUR = 655.957 XAF.

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

These taxes are unavoidable regardless of exemption status.

Duties & Taxes

Two taxes apply to ALL personal effects shipments, including diplomatic shipments:

- La redevance informatique (computer tax): 2% of CIF value
- La taxe ARC (assurance): 0.8% of cost and freight value

Duty-free entry: Personal effects may qualify for duty-free entry (beyond the two mandatory taxes) if all documents are submitted to the destination agent at least 15 days before the shipment's arrival and the certificate of free entry is obtained from the Customs head office in advance.

VAT: The standard VAT rate is 18.9% (the Republic of Congo applies 18% VAT plus a 5% centimes additionnels surcharge bringing the effective rate to approximately 18.9%).

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and illegal drugs
- Counterfeit goods
- Items of historical significance (export prohibited)
- Products from endangered species without CITES documentation CITES
- Firearms and ammunition without authorization PERMIT REQUIRED

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Duty-free traveler's baggage allowances: Contact the destination agent for current personal allowance limits.

Items subject to the two mandatory taxes (even when otherwise exempt):

- All personal effects shipments pay 2% computer tax (CIF) and 0.8% ARC tax (C&F)
- No exceptions, including for diplomats

Weapons, ammunition, and explosives: Require permits from competent authorities. PERMIT REQUIRED

Hazardous products and chemical products: Require import permits.

Farm products (including meat and poultry): Require import permits and sanitary certificates.

Endangered species: Prohibited or restricted under CITES. CITES

Historical artifacts: It is prohibited to export items of historical significance (wood pieces, sculptures, paintings). Violators risk imprisonment and heavy fines.

Consignment Instructions

Recommended: Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences regarding air / sea shipments.

15-day document lead time: All original documents must be received by the destination agent at least 15 days prior to the shipment's arrival to obtain the certificate of free entry from the Customs head office. Late documents will delay or prevent the free-entry process.

French-language inventory required: Detailed, valued, and signed by the owner.

New items inventory: New items purchased less than 6 months before import must be listed separately with original invoices attached.

Ports of entry: The primary sea port is Pointe-Noire (on the Atlantic coast). Air freight arrives at Maya-Maya International Airport (BZV) in Brazzaville and Agostinho-Neto International Airport (PNR) in Pointe-Noire.

Baggage clearance: Must be cleared at the first airport of entry in Congo. This applies to transit passengers as well.

Overland transit from Pointe-Noire to Brazzaville: Approximately 500 km. The railway (Chemin de Fer Congo-Océan) connects the two cities but has experienced disruptions. Road transport is an alternative. Allow additional transit time.

Security environment: The U.S. State Department advises travelers to exercise increased caution. Crime (including violent crime) and political unrest are concerns, particularly in Brazzaville's outlying neighborhoods. Armed gang activity has been reported.

Infrastructure: Infrastructure is more developed than in the DRC but still limited by regional standards. Pointe-Noire has better port facilities as a major oil industry center.