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A PROFILE OF DRC PRIME MINISTER AUGUSTIN MATATA PONYO MAPON

BY PAUL H. TRUSTFULL



Secretary General of the International Francophonie Organization (OIF) Abdou Diouf with DRC President Joseph Kabila at a press conference during the Francophonie Summit in Kinshasa, October 13-14, 2012

This year's Francophonie Summit has revealed an emerging leader for developing Africa: Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon, prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Less than a year into his tenure, he has refocused global attention from the dire economic situa-

tions in Europe and the U.S. to Africa's growth story. Passionate, resilient and a champion of progress, Prime Minister Ponyo is leading the charge to creating a new Africa.

Since taking the helm of the DRC earlier this year, Prime Minister Ponyo has been diligently working to change the global

perception of his country—and of Africa as a whole. Rising from the ashes of warfare and sustained poverty, the DRC has emerged as a democratic nation that is keen on utilizing its wealth, in both human capital and mineral abundance, to develop the country and transform it into an African center for economic activity.

President Joseph Kabila and Prime Minister Ponyo recently hosted the 14th Francophonie Summit in Kinshasa, showcasing the progress and promise of the DRC. They welcomed the world to explore the DRC and its potential as a quickly rising African superpower.

This biannual gathering of the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) celebrates the French language and culture and focuses on the economy, justice and peace. It also serves to exhibit the progress of the Francophonie nations. The 2012 summit in Kinshasa aimed to do just that.

Prime Minister Ponyo welcomed dozens of heads of states from French-speaking nations, including President François Hollande of France and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. The successful Francophonie Summit showcased the city's gleaming new hotels, highways and airport terminals and reintroduced the world to the many possibilities of the DRC. Under

Prime Minister Ponyo's stewardship, Kinshasa has emerged as representative of today's Africa, with showpieces such as the new five-star Fleuve Congo Hotel and the freshly repaved Boulevard du 30 Juin.

This central African nation's growth has not gone unnoticed. However, the message of progress has often been mired in a flurry of news about rebelled warfare in the eastern region of the country. Rebels in the M23 movement, which is allegedly supported by the Rwandan government, are attempting to disrupt civility and bring back conflict to the Kivu region of the nation. Despite the residual turmoil, the growth trajectory of the DRC is one that can serve as a model for other African nations.

Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon's Vision

Before President Kabila appointed him to his current role in April 2012, Prime Minister Ponyo rose through the ranks within

the nation's Ministry of Finance, ultimately becoming its head in 2010. Prime Minister Ponyo is a firm believer in stability and the private sector as key to the nation's growth. From his time as Minister of Finance to the present, he has worked diligently to encourage free enterprise in the DRC and in Africa as a whole.

Prime Minister Ponyo recognizes Africa's value proposition for international investors, especially at a time of turmoil in the international markets. He has worked alongside President Joseph Kabila to shape a framework for developing the DRC and maximizing the benefits to its citizens. Prime Minister Ponyo's administration improved the legal system and implemented business-friendly regulations, lowered corporate taxes and decreased the amount of bureaucracy involved in starting and running businesses. By creating an environment similar to that of developed nations, the DRC seeks to further increase the inflow of private capital.



Clockwise from top left: DRC Prime Minister Ponyo with European Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs; DRC President Joseph Kabila and his wife Olive arrive at the Francophonie Summit; Isidore Ndaywel, OIF Organizing Committee Chairman, welcomes OIF Secretary General Abdou Diouf to the Francophonie Summit



Francophonie Summit attendees

Countries throughout Africa are often characterized by the “resource curse.” This is a paradox in which development is marred by exploitation of the very natural resources that should lead to national prosperity. Prime Minister Ponyo is working diligently to diversify the nation’s economy and allow different sectors to thrive and contribute. The DRC is rich in minerals and hydrocarbon deposits, and possesses an estimated \$24 trillion’s worth of raw deposits of copper, diamonds and gold.

According to Prime Minister Ponyo, “While the country is very wealthy in mineral resources, it is imperative to diversify beyond this endowment to propel the Democratic Republic of Congo forward to become a state that can compete economically on a global scale.”

Structural investments and changes in governance are under way in the DRC to remake the industrial fabric of the country. Investments in energy, transportation—mainly roads and rail—and communication infrastructure are the highest priority for Ponyo’s administration, as projects by

both the state and private enterprises are key to the growth of the nation.

Ponyo states further: “These investments and developments provide the framework to simultaneously boost different drivers of the economy, and they represent the basis of our progress as a nation.”

Looking at the vast potential in the agricultural, manufacturing and energy sectors, Prime Minister Ponyo seeks to build these industries through public-



DRC Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon and Belgian Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo

private partnerships. By engaging the business community, he hopes to incentivize industry development while creating jobs for the Congolese and building an infrastructure for the benefit of future generations.

Agricultural Sector Is a Key Driver of the Congolese Economy

The massive deposits of minerals in the Katanga Province are considered by many to be some of the largest reserves in the world. While these are key to the DRC’s rise as a regional superpower, Prime Minister Ponyo sees even greater potential in the country’s agricultural sector. Recent studies conducted by his parliament illustrate that the potential of this industry is so large its output could be used to nourish 2.9 billion people—more than all of the African continent’s inhabitants.

“Agriculture,” says Prime Minister Ponyo, “must be one of the sectors used to spearhead the Congolese economy and take it to unprecedented levels.”

The current strategy for developing the agricultural sector is based on

investments throughout the value chain to boost the number and size of commercial farms. This will create an opportunity not only to drive the economy through the export market, but also to help in the fight against hunger and malnutrition in the DRC and Africa.

Given its land, water and energy resources, the DRC can develop a large-scale commercial agriculture industry that includes fishing, livestock and crop production around a systematic network of production and distribution. This approach will enable the country to take advantage of the entire value supply chain of the industry, from farming inputs to the development of effective systems of food distribution. This approach will also build irrigation infrastructure, varied modes of transportation, storage and assembly capabilities from the ground up.

Current investment is funding the development of action plans specifying the types of intervention necessary within the framework of a national strategy for

food security in the DRC. By creating public-private partnerships within the agricultural industry, the DRC looks to increase food production efficiency to meet its needs and foster growth.

Looking Beyond Traditional Partners for Growth

The global economic downturn played a massive role in impeding the growth of developing nations. Traditional European partners are now questioning their own solvency and their investment abilities to help developing Africa.

Frozen capital flows, hampered trade and a 2.7% decrease in official development assistance have plagued Africa's emerging nations and put into question its short-term growth. With uncertainties still remaining, the DRC and other African nations have begun to create long-term partnerships with China and India through mutually beneficial bilateral agreements.

The expertise of other developing countries has been vital to the DRC.

Chinese companies, for example, have aided it in creating a plan to rehabilitate the Grand Inga Dam and bring it on line, thus setting the nation on a path to energy independence and perhaps even energy exportation. In recent talks with new Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Prime Minister Ponyo secured the assistance of his Chinese counterpart to help the nation progress and reach new levels of economic growth and civil stability. Similarly, Indian companies have been vital in helping develop the communication infrastructure necessary for the DRC to modernize its current systems and develop plans for future innovation.

The DRC continues to develop at a rapid pace, with diligent work by the nation's leaders to usher in progress and create investor-friendly relations. By creating a stable environment that allows businesses to thrive, the DRC can develop into a dominant power in Africa. Prime Minister Ponyo and his country are ready to show the world a new Africa. ■



French President François Hollande and DRC Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo Mapon