



February 26, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick via DAS Thomas Bruns
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Advancing a U.S.-DRC Strategic Partnership for Critical Mineral Security and Economic Growth

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

The United States has a historic opportunity to strengthen its economic leadership and national security by securing direct access to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) vast mineral resources. The DRC possesses over \$24 trillion in untapped reserves, including cobalt, copper, lithium, tantalum, and uranium—all essential to U.S. manufacturing, technology, and defense industries.

As the leading advocate for American economic growth and industrial strength, the Department of Commerce plays a central role in ensuring that U.S. businesses have access to these critical materials, reducing foreign dependencies, and securing long-term supply chain resilience. A U.S.-DRC economic and trade partnership would directly advance American business interests, job creation, and national competitiveness.

An Unprecedented Opportunity for U.S. Businesses

The DRC is the world's largest supplier of cobalt and a major producer of copper and other high-value minerals used in defense systems, aerospace technology, and critical infrastructure projects. A U.S.-DRC partnership would:

- Provide American businesses exclusive access to the world's most valuable mineral deposits.
- Bolster U.S. industry by securing a stable and reliable supply chain for essential materials.
- Create new jobs and investment opportunities in mining, refining, and infrastructure development.
- Reduce U.S. dependence on unstable or adversarial supply networks, safeguarding economic and national security interests.

President Félix Tshisekedi has publicly invited the United States to invest in the DRC's mineral sector, presenting an immediate opportunity to strengthen economic ties and secure long-term access to these strategic resources. The failure to act decisively could allow other global players to establish dominance, putting U.S. industry at a disadvantage.

To capitalize on this moment of opportunity, Senator Pierre Kanda Kalambayi and I propose an urgent high-level visit for President Tshisekedi to meet with you and other key U.S. leaders in Washington, D.C. This engagement would:

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- Advance U.S. investment interests by securing direct trade and resource agreements.
- Ensure priority access to minerals essential to national security and economic stability.
- Lay the groundwork for a long-term, mutually beneficial economic and trade partnership.

Additionally, we strongly encourage President Trump's direct involvement in these discussions to align U.S. strategic priorities and secure congressional support for this initiative.

The Strategic Importance of a U.S.-DRC Partnership

For over two decades, the DRC has faced security challenges linked to foreign-backed militant groups that exploit its natural resources. These activities have led to:

- Over 15 million Congolese deaths, making this the deadliest conflict since World War II.
- Displacement, violence, and human rights abuses tied to illicit mining operations controlled by militant groups.
- The systematic looting of high-value minerals, many of which end up in unregulated markets, fueling rogue state activities.

Most recently, on January 22, 2025, hostile forces seized 10 percent of Congolese territory, targeting the highest-value mineral deposits. If left unchecked, this instability could:

- Undermine regional security and economic development.
- Create illicit trade networks that bypass U.S. export controls, potentially funding unauthorized weapons programs.
- Destabilize global supply chains, increasing volatility for U.S. manufacturers and defense industries.

A U.S.-DRC strategic partnership would serve as a stabilizing force, ensuring that resources are extracted, processed, and distributed through legal, transparent, and U.S.-aligned channels—blocking pathways that could otherwise be exploited by hostile actors.

Proposed U.S.-DRC Economic and Security Partnership

1. U.S. Access to Strategic Minerals
 - Establishing direct partnerships between American companies and the DRC for extraction, refining, and exports.
2. Banana Deep-Water Port Development
 - Granting U.S. firms operational control of the DRC's primary mineral export hub, ensuring secure and efficient trade routes.
3. Creation of a U.S.-DRC Strategic Mineral Stockpile
 - Strengthening U.S. supply chain security by developing a joint stockpile of critical materials essential for defense and industry.
4. Strengthening Military Cooperation
 - Training and equipping the Congolese Armed Forces to protect mineral supply routes from foreign-backed militant groups.
 - Granting the U.S. access to military bases in key zones to protect strategic resources.

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- Replacing ineffective U.N. peacekeeping operations with direct U.S.-DRC security cooperation.
- 5. Enhanced Trade and Investment Incentives
 - Implementing tax incentives, financing programs, and special trade provisions to encourage U.S. business expansion in the DRC.

Call to Action: The Time to Act is Now

Secretary Lutnick, this is a pivotal opportunity to advance U.S. economic and national security interests by securing a reliable and long-term mineral partnership with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A U.S.-DRC strategic trade partnership will reinforce American industrial leadership, create jobs, and ensure global economic influence for the future.

We request an urgent high-level meeting with President Tshisekedi in Washington, D.C., followed by a direct discussion with President Trump to finalize this historic economic and trade agreement.

We are prepared to engage in immediate discussions and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Dr. Aaron Poynton, U.S. President of the Africa-USA Business Council

██████████ (m) | ██████████@africa-usa.biz | ██████████@omnipoynt.com

On Behalf of Senator Pierre Kanda Kalambayi
Chairman, Committee on Defense, Security, and Border Protection
Democratic Republic of the Congo

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