



PRESS RELEASE

THE GOVERNMENTS OF DRC AND KENYA ANNOUNCE TRADE MISSION OF KENYAN ENTREPRENEURS TO DRC IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EQUITY GROUP AND ITS SUBSIDIARY EQUITYBCDC, TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL TRADE IN EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA AND THE GREAT LAKES REGION

- *The trade mission includes a 14-day visit to the DRC between 29 November and 13 December to Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Goma and Mbuji Mayi.*
- *Kenyan investors will meet and network with their DRC counterparts to explore opportunities to unlock trade, tourism and investment in the DRC and the Great Lakes region.*
- *Kenyan Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs are invited to register and participate in the upcoming trade mission.*

Kinshasa, DRC - 11 November 2021.... The Government of the DRC (DRC) and the Government of Kenya (GoK), in partnership with the Equity Group through its subsidiaries in Kenya, Equity Bank Kenya and Equity BCDC, its banking subsidiary in the DRC, have come together to organize and facilitate a 14-day trade mission to the DRC from November 29 to December 13, as part of ongoing efforts to promote regional trade and business growth.

The trade mission, which is expected to attract over 200 investors and business participants from Kenya, and a similar number from the DRC as well as the public, will include trade exhibitions, business forums, site visits and matchmaking in four of the DRC's largest cities - **Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Goma and Mbuji Mayi.**

This joint initiative is the result of an agreement between **H.E. President of the DRC, Felix Tshisekedi and H.E. President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta** signed earlier in April 2021 in Kinshasa when the two principals met to complete bilateral agreements between Kenya and the DRC aimed at improving trade and movement of people and goods. President Kenyatta said, "This is a moment of rare regional and continental pride as we witness our local businesses coming together in the spirit of 'One Africa, One People'. Our forefathers fought to secure not only political freedom, but also economic freedom for our people. Political freedom is secured; economic liberation is the task of our time."

The decision comes as the DRC's application to join the East African Community (EAC) has passed the technical committee stage and the Regional Council of Ministers is expected to give its final verdict in November.

Equity Group will help facilitate the trade mission by mobilizing SMEs from Equity Bank Kenya and Equity BCDC, networking and connecting local businesses with their counterparts in the DRC and Kenya, and coordinating the trade mission. The fair aims to optimize the opportunities offered by regional cooperation frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), COMESA and other trade frameworks come online to take advantage of trade corridors and to create regional supply chains.

According to the World Bank, the DRC is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, with an area equivalent to that of Western Europe. The country offers enormous untapped opportunities to access one of the world's largest economic frontiers. This includes exceptional natural resources such as cobalt and copper, hydroelectric potential, significant arable land, immense biodiversity and the second largest rainforest in the world.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister of Industry, Julien Paluku said: "I am sure that Kenya, which already has experience in investment, will help the DRC to nurture the same experience and especially to be able to expand its industrial fabric because the four cities you mentioned, namely Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Goma and Mbuji Mayi, are not enough to cover the DRC. I would like to invite Equity in the second phase, because I consider this one as the pilot phase, to also extend the economic activities to Kisangani and in the Equateur area to practice the exploitation of wood which would allow to have a capacity to export the treated wood from the DRC. These same areas abound in rubber trees to produce rubber or latex. So, it is possible to set up a tire manufacturing plant even in the DRC because we have the raw material.

In his speech, the Minister of Industry also added: "You come at the right time when the DRC wants to organize the DRC Africa Business Forum whose main theme is to develop a value chain around the industry in countries and the market of electric cars. Recently, we have just had the restitution of a study that was conducted by Bloomberg which shows that the DRC is the best destination in terms of investment in the battery industry. Today, the world, in its strategy to fight against climate change, wants to make greater use of electric batteries whose raw materials or components come from minerals from the DRC, including cobalt, lithium, manganese and other minerals. It is therefore an opportunity for Kenyan and Congolese investors, who would like to take advantage of this opportunity to consider that the world market has a demand in the next 5 years of 145 million electric cars. This makes a global envelope of 6 thousand billion dollars. You understand that by investing in this sector, Kenyan and Congolese operators should do good business.

Dr. George Masafu, Kenya's ambassador to the DRC, said: "We have long thought that economic diplomacy would transform the continent. As ambassador from Kenya in the DRC, my focus has been to support the collaboration between our two great countries to expand opportunities for all our peoples. We have based our relationship development on cooperation with the activity of shared trade as a means by which our linkages can be strengthened. The commitment of our two Presidents should serve as an example to us to create a sustainable and friendly environment so that Kenyan and Congolese businesses can pursue the same logic for partnership. Ambassador Masafu went on to say that, "Both governments are supporting these efforts because this is a mutually beneficial initiative to successfully grow the private sector in each country, utilizing business and international relations as a tool."

Launching the trade mission to Kinshasa, Dr. James Mwangi, the MD and CEO of Equity Group, said, "We commend the Governments of Kenya and DRC for promoting regional integration and cooperation. The inaugural trade mission to DRC of Kenya businesses will encourage Kenyan private sector players to venture into DRC by showing entrepreneurs the untapped opportunities in the market which Equity Group has seen first-hand. Equity Group believes in promoting socio-economic prosperity for the people of Africa and we are delighted to create a platform that encourages networking and benchmarking of business opportunities while providing market intelligence, which are key elements that drive business growth and success in East and Central Africa and the Great Lakes region. The trade mission is in line with Equity's post COVID Resilience and Growth plan in Africa."

Further, "We have Kshs 500 billion to support and facilitate the private sector and business community to develop and expand their businesses in Kenya, the DRC and the region." Equity has been operating in DRC since 2015 and has grown to become the 2nd largest bank in the market. We have gained enough experience in the six countries we operate in and the region to support businesses looking to venture into the DRC and the greater East, Central Africa and Great Lakes region," added Dr. Mwangi.

"We welcome the initiative of cooperation agreement of our two Congolese and Kenyan presidents which led to the realization of this trade mission. We are proud to participate and to be among the organizers and we are convinced that it is a first step to open the DRC towards investments, capable of creating employment in the country because the experience of Kenya is easily applicable in the DRC. Beyond our borders, we recall that we have the same ancestor. On this, we are African brothers. It is therefore time to support each other and to stand up and break the cultural barrier to develop a cooperative economy that transforms the lives of our people. EquityBCDC is a subsidiary of the Equity Group, a Kenyan company that has made a name for itself in the banking sector in the DRC through its leadership, its many technological innovations and its know-how. A living proof that the collaboration between Kenya and DRC is sustainable. We take this opportunity to thank our teams, both Congolese and Kenyan, who are working tirelessly for the success of this trade fair", said Celestin Mukeba, the Managing Director of EquityBCDC.

Equity Bank has recently signed two guarantee facilities with Proparco, ARIZ and EURIZ, for a total of €39 million (KES 5 billion), to enable the Kenyan bank to further support MSMEs across the region.

In the DRC, EquityBCDC is one of the few, if not the only, Congolese commercial bank that has experimented with agricultural financing in recent years. The Bank has been able to create an agricultural portfolio that is currently close to USD 15 million with a default rate (Portfolio at Risk or PAR) of less than 1%. Recently, it signed an agreement with PEJAB (Projet d'Entrepreneuriat des Jeunes dans l'Agriculture et l'Agro-business) to finance the business plans of 500 young people.

The main economic sectors targeted by the trade fair are agriculture, education, health, sports and tourism. Other sectors are the environment, SMEs, housing, energy and infrastructure development. The Congolese public and private sectors have been invited to register and participate in this opportunity.

To register, please visit <http://equitygroupholdings.com/DRCTradeMission> and follow the instructions provided.

About Equity Group

The Equity Group is a pan-African financial services holding company listed on the Nairobi, Uganda and Rwanda stock exchanges. The group has banking subsidiaries in Kenya, DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan, as well as a commercial representative office in Ethiopia. It has other subsidiaries in investment banking, insurance, telecommunications, fintechs and social impact investments.

Equity Group is the largest bank in the region with assets of Kshs 1.12 trillion (USD 11.2 billion). It is also the largest bank in terms of deposits, with a market capitalization of USD 2 billion and a customer base of over 15 million. The group has 337 branches, 56,772 agents, 32,269 merchants, 697 ATMs and has widely adopted digital banking channels.

The Banker's Top 1,000 World Banks 2020 ranked Equity Bank 754th in its global ranking, 62nd in terms of strength (Capital Assets/Assets ratio), 55th in terms of Profits on Capital and 20th in terms of Return on Assets. The Banker's Top 100 African Banks 2020 placed the Bank in 7th position among the top 10 banks in Africa, in

5th position for strength, in 9th position for growth performance, in 8th position for return on risk and in 6th position in terms of profitability and leverage category.

In the same year, Moody's gave the Bank an overall rating of B2 with a negative outlook, identical to the Kenyan government's sovereign rating, due to the strong brand recognition of the Bank, strong liquidity buffers and resilient funding profile, a well-established national franchise and the widespread adoption of digital and alternative distribution channels.

About EquityBCDC

EquityBCDC is a commercial bank operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was born from the merger, after 112 years, between Equity Bank Congo and Banque Commerciale du Congo (BCDC).

EquityBCDC serves over 1,000,000 customers through an extensive network of 70 branches across the DRC, 13 dedicated western union branches, 214 ATMs, 14 ATMs, 10 Master Agents and over 3,700 banking agents to complement its digital channels, making it the largest financial services network in the DRC.

The bank is part of the Equity Group, a financial services company listed on the Nairobi, Uganda and Rwanda stock exchanges. In addition to EquityBCDC, the group has banking subsidiaries in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and South Sudan, as well as a commercial representative office in Ethiopia. Other non-banking subsidiaries provide investment banking, custody, insurance agency, consulting, infrastructure services and the Equity Group Foundation.

Web link: <https://equitygroupholdings.com>

For more information or questions about the trade mission, please contact

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DRC Trade Fair Portal: <http://equitygroupholdings.com/DRCTradeMission>