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Putin Says Russia Seeks Deeper Economic Ties With Congo

April 29, 2026



Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso (left) and President Vladimir Putin (right) in the Kremlin. **Kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Moscow is looking to deepen economic cooperation with the Republic of the Congo, as Russia continues efforts to strengthen ties across Africa through trade, investment and debt relief.

Speaking at the Kremlin during talks with Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso, Putin said Russian companies were interested in expanding operations in the Central African country in sectors including geological exploration, energy, logistics and agriculture.

“We have good prospects for developing our relations in a variety of areas,” Putin said, according to the Kremlin.

“In the economy, our relations cover geological prospecting, energy, logistics, agriculture, and several other areas. Russian companies are ready and eager to work on your country's market,” he said.

Putin added that Russian businesses valued what he described as Congo's political stability, saying this created favorable conditions for investment.

The meeting comes as Moscow seeks to expand its political and economic footprint in Africa, where it has increasingly used debt forgiveness, security partnerships and trade deals to bolster influence amid growing confrontation with the West.

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The Kremlin said Putin also congratulated Sassou Nguesso on his latest election victory, after the Congolese leader secured a fifth consecutive presidential term with an officially reported 94.82% of the vote.

Sassou Nguesso, who has ruled the Republic of the Congo since 1997, removed presidential term limits through a 2015 referendum, a move that drew comparisons to constitutional changes in Russia in 2020 that allowed Putin to potentially remain in power until 2036.

In 2023, Putin approved the cancellation of the Republic of the Congo's $29.64 million debt to Russia under a "debt-for-development" program.

That same year, Russia also wrote off nearly $700 million in debt for Somalia, while in 2024 it canceled $26.7 million owed by Guinea-Bissau.

Putin said in May 2023 that Russia had forgiven more than $20 billion in African debt, much of it dating back to the Soviet era.

Among the largest write-offs were Angola's $3.5 billion debt linked to Soviet-era arms purchases, Ethiopia's $5 billion debt, Algeria's $5.7 billion and Libya's $4.5 billion.

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