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Democratic Republic of Congo to disclose large-scale agricultural contracts

In partnership with the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, documents will be available via a new online repository

KINSHASA, Congo and New York, October 5, 2016— The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) announced today that it will make available to the public all of its large-scale agricultural contracts, and that it will develop a new online repository for these documents in partnership with the [Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment](#).

The new repository will be linked to OpenLandContracts.org, a global repository of publicly available land, agriculture, and forestry contracts. As with the global version, the DRC's site will provide summaries of key social, environmental, fiscal, and operational provisions, as well as tools for searching and comparing contracts, marking the first time that a country will disclose its agricultural contracts in such an accessible format.

Disclosure of agricultural contracts will build on the DRC's efforts to strengthen governance of its natural resources and improve resource use in sectors with high potential for growth. The DRC Prime Minister, His Excellency Augustin Matata Ponyo, stated that "good governance and transparency is important for the development process of the country." As previously stressed by the Prime Minister at the signing ceremony for the [Business Code of Ethics and Conduct](#), there is a need for sound governance in agricultural investment through the promotion and respect of human rights, environmental management, labor standards, and anti-corruption laws. The planned repository will also complement the country's ongoing effort to make already-disclosed mining contracts more accessible through a partnership with ResourceContracts.org, a repository of extractive contracts that is jointly managed by the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, the Natural Resource Governance Institute, and the World Bank.

Once the government discloses its estimated 20 agricultural contracts, which it aims to do by early 2017, it will be the second country in the world to provide transparency for both agricultural and forestry contracts. Transparency of such contracts can help ensure greater accountability and trust among governments, investors, and citizens. Disclosure of contracts or



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their terms is strongly encouraged in a number of prominent guidelines and principles; UN member countries have also made ensuring public access to information a Sustainable Development Goals target.

“The DRC government’s decision to publicly disclose agricultural contracts is an important move,” said Kaitlin Cordes, who leads the land and agricultural work of the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, a joint center of Columbia Law School and the Earth Institute that focuses on ensuring that international investment contributes to sustainable development. “Despite the strong consensus at this point on the importance of transparency, too few governments and investors have been willing to make their agricultural and forestry contracts publicly available, and most investments in this area are astoundingly opaque, lagging far behind contract transparency in the extractives sector,” Cordes said. At least 29 countries have either disclosed their extractive contracts or have committed to doing so.

“This step should be welcomed by all those interested in strengthening transparency and accountability around public resources,” said Michael Jarvis, Executive Director of the Transparency & Accountability Initiative. “Making such information public in a meaningful, accessible way is critical to enabling citizen understanding and informing good practice,” Jarvis said. As pointed out by John Mususa Ulimwengu, Senior Research Fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute and Senior Advisor to the DRC Prime Minister, “availability of such information will improve the quality of policymaking processes and ensure greater efficiency in the use of agricultural resources to achieve sustainable development goals.”

For more information about OpenLandContracts.org, please visit www.OpenLandContracts.org, email info@openlandcontracts.org, or contact:

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