ANNUAL MARKET INTELLIGENCE

THE UAE–DRC CORRIDOR

From Diplomatic Alignment to Commercial Execution

A Market Intelligence Report

Thamani Management Consultants FZCO · Dubai, UAE · June 2026

2026

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Logistics & Trade Infrastructure

02

Critical Minerals & Value Chains

03

Clean Energy & Enabling Infrastructure

ABOUT THIS REPORT

A Commercial Intelligence Platform for the UAE–DRC Corridor

This report has been prepared by Thamani Management Consultants FZCO as part of our ongoing commercial intelligence series on the UAE–Africa investment corridor.

It is intended for senior decision-makers within UAE-based investment offices, family offices, and corporate development teams. It is equally relevant for DRC-facing stakeholders — including ministries, investment promotion bodies, regulators, state-owned entities, private-sector groups, mining operators, logistics companies, and energy-sector counterparties.

The analysis draws on publicly available data, bilateral trade statistics, and our direct market experience.

UAE Audiences

Investment offices · Family offices
Corporate development · Infrastructure investors
Trade institutions · Strategic corporates

DRC Audiences

Relevant ministries · Investment promotion bodies
Mining operators · Logistics & energy companies
Chambers of commerce · Local developers

Sourcing note: Numbered superscripts link to the Source Notes section. Where this report makes a commercial judgement rather than citing a factual source, it is presented in a Thamani Assessment panel.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UAE–DRC Corridor: A Strategic Shift in Motion

The signing of the UAE–DRC CEPA in February 2026 formalises a commercial relationship that has been building quietly for several years. For investors and institutions on both sides of the corridor, the timing represents a genuine early-mover window.

$2.9Bn
UAE–DRC non-oil trade
9 months to Sept 2025

16.1%
Year-on-year growth
2024 vs 2025 period

$10Bn
Bilateral trade target
Government ambition, 2030

~$24Tr
Estimated mineral potential
Widely cited estimate

Source: UAE Ministry of Foreign Trade / WAM, Feb 2026 [1]; mineral estimate: geological survey data [7]

01

Logistics & Trade Infrastructure

Banana Port (DP World), first-phase completion ~early 2027. Cascading demand across inland logistics, dry ports, and industrial zones.

02

Critical Minerals & Value Chains

IRH US$367M tin acquisition (2025). DRC produces >70% of global cobalt and is Africa's largest copper producer.

03

Clean Energy & Enabling Infrastructure

<19% electrification nationally. Industrial growth and mineral processing both require the energy layer to be built first.

From Signature to Implementation

On 2 February 2026, the UAE and DRC signed a CEPA at Qasr Al Shati, Abu Dhabi — accompanied by an MoU on mining investment, a diplomatic academy exchange, and a maritime transport accord. Entry into force remains subject to both governments' confirmation. [1]

Provision	Detail
Tariff liberalisation	~6,000 Congolese products expected to gain UAE market access (per Congolese officials) [1]
Investment target	UAE investment in DRC targeted at $10 billion by 2030 [1]
Priority sectors	Mining, agriculture, clean energy — identified by both governments [1]
Mining MoU	Investment cooperation in minerals; signed alongside CEPA [1]
Maritime transport	Bilateral cooperation on shipping and port access [1]
Trade facilitation	Simplified procedures; reduction of trade bottlenecks [1]

UAE CEPA Programme

30+ agreements concluded

15 in force by early 2026

India–UAE CEPA benchmark:

37% trade growth over 4 years

(with important caveats for DRC context [2])

COMMERCIAL IMPLICATION

The CEPA creates a practical commercial framework. The more consequential question is not what was signed — but what implementation requires, and who is positioned to enable it.

Logistics & Trade Infrastructure

600m	18m	450k	30ha
Quay length	Draught depth	TEU capacity	Storage area
Phase 1	*Deep water*	*Annual, Phase 1*	*Container yard*

Source: DP World project specifications; UAE–DRC CEPA communiqué, Feb 2026 [3]

Banana Port: The Anchor Catalyst

DP World awarded the main construction contract to Mota-Engil in March 2025. Phase-one dredging completed mid-2025. First-phase completion targeted ~early 2027, subject to execution progress. BII committed $35M as minority co-investor in 2024. [3]

The commercial case for Banana Port is well understood. Less quantified is the infrastructure demand it creates in its wake — what the port makes necessary.

THAMANI ASSESSMENT · Commercial Judgement

The second-order infrastructure opportunities are, in our assessment, significantly under-priced relative to the attention directed at the port itself. Inland logistics and customs digitisation are likely to attract institutional capital as Banana's operational timeline firms up.

SECOND-ORDER OPPORTUNITIES

- Inland logistics corridors
- Dry ports & bonded facilities
- Customs digitisation
- Industrial zones
- Cold chain & agri-logistics
- Boma Port redevelopment [4]

Critical Minerals & Value Chains

>70%	#1	~$24Tr
Global cobalt production	Africa copper producer	Mineral potential (est.)

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Parallel U.S.–DRC, UAE–U.S. and UAE–DRC critical minerals initiatives point toward supply-chain diversification.

U.S. Project Vault (~$12Bn) and the 2026 Critical Minerals Ministerial (UAE, EU, DRC, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia) signal growing multilateral alignment. [8]

COMMERCIAL IMPLICATION

The DRC mineral story is no longer simply about resource exposure. It is about positioning within a global supply chain realignment with state-level momentum from Washington to Abu Dhabi.

UAE Capital is Already Moving

Abu Dhabi IRH:	Acquired ~56% of Alphamin Resources (Bisie Tin Complex) for US$367M · July 2025 · ~6–7% of global tin supply [5]
NG9 Holding:	Partnership with Buenassa for DRC's first integrated copper-cobalt refinery; targeting 30,000t copper cathodes + 5,000t cobalt sulphate p.a. [6]
Gécamines–Mercuria:	First direct copper cathode supply DRC → UAE & Saudi Arabia: 50,000 tonnes — a structural shift in Congolese export routing [6]

Value Chain — Investment Entry Points

Exploration & extraction:	Greenfield/brownfield; Chinese dominance creates Gulf capital openings
Processing & refining:	Copper cathode, cobalt sulphate, LiOH facilities; energy-intensive
Traceability & certification:	EU/US responsible sourcing requirements; growing compliance demand

Clean Energy & Enabling Infrastructure

<19%	1%	100GW+	3%
Electrification rate	Rural electrification	Hydropower potential	Hydro utilised
National	*vs 41% urban*	*Congo River*	*Of identified potential*

Source: World Bank; IEA DRC Energy Outlook; SE4All Africa Hub [9]

Inga I & II — the DRC's primary assets — have 1,775 MW installed capacity but operate well below potential. Grand Inga III remains in development. The DRC's Governing Industrialisation Plan (PDI) calls for $22 billion in power investment through 2040. [9, 10]

Clean energy is a CEPA priority sector — creating a bilateral pathway for Gulf developers in a market historically dominated by development finance institutions.

COMMERCIAL IMPLICATION

Energy is the enabling condition. Investors who address the power constraint will hold a strategic position across all three pillars.

Utility-Scale Solar PV

High irradiation; limited competition; large industrial off-takers

Battery Energy Storage

Grid stabilisation, renewable firming, industrial captive power

Hydropower Rehabilitation

Inga I/II rehab; run-of-river plants; lower greenfield risk

Captive Power for Mining

Industrial PPAs; reduces off-take risk; linked to mineral processing

Mini-Grid & Off-Grid

Rural electrification; DFI co-financing; government policy priority

Waste-to-Energy

Kinshasa urban waste; early-stage; growing development partner interest

What Investors Need to Know

The DRC investment environment is high-complexity. This is not a reason to avoid engagement — many of the world's most durable resource investments have been built in similar environments. It is a reason to engage with precision.

Risk Category	Level	Investor Implication
Political & governance	Moderate	Policy volatility manageable with appropriate structuring. Tshisekedi government has demonstrated infrastructure commitment. [11]
Security (eastern DRC)	High	M23 conflict material for eastern province operations. Kinshasa and Kongo Central have significantly lower exposure. [11]
Regulatory & legal	Moderate	Credit scarce (16–18% rates). ANAPI provides facilitation. Proper legal structuring — including HoldCo architecture — is essential. [11]
Execution & implementation	High	Stakeholder fragmentation, information asymmetry, unclear approval pathways. Local knowledge and relationships are the differentiator. [Thamani]
ESG & supply chain	Moderate	Human rights, child labour, responsible sourcing obligations growing for EU/US off-take. Due diligence standards increasing. [11]
Currency & financial	Moderate	USD-denominated large transactions reduce FX risk. Local banking underdeveloped; institutional investors use co-investment structures. [11]

Source: U.S. State Department Investment Climate Statement 2025; Coface Country Risk File (DRC); M&J Group risk analysis [11]

MITIGANTS

- Geopolitical alignment creating institutional backing [8]
- BII, IFC, AfDB active in DRC infrastructure [3,9]
- CEPA provides formal commercial engagement basis [1]
- Western DRC has materially lower security exposure [11]

Why the Window is Now

Market timing in frontier environments is about recognising when structural conditions have aligned sufficiently — and whether delay creates a meaningful disadvantage.

CEPA Signed [1]

Bilateral framework signed Feb 2026; entry into force to be confirmed. A formal commercial basis that did not previously exist.

Banana Port nearing completion [3]

First-phase ~early 2027, subject to execution. Unlocks inland logistics investment on a defined timeline.

Geopolitical alignment building [8]

Parallel U.S.–DRC, UAE–U.S., UAE–DRC initiatives suggest growing institutional support for non-Chinese capital.

Gulf capital active [5, 6]

IRH, NG9, and others already building DRC positions. Reference infrastructure for UAE investors being established now.

Government commitment [1, 3]

Tshisekedi government has demonstrated political will on infrastructure delivery and investor engagement.

DFI pipeline building [3, 9]

World Bank, AfDB, and BII deploying capital in DRC energy and infrastructure; co-investment pathways developing.

A PHASED APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

Phase 1 — Market intelligence & relationship building — ANAPI, DMCC, sector counterparts

Phase 2 — Structured pilot engagement — local partners, institutional backing, risk architecture

Phase 3 — Platform deployment — repeatable capability leveraging CEPA & co-investment structures

The UAE–DRC Corridor in 2030

The DRC–UAE relationship is not a short-cycle trade story. It is a 10–15 year structural investment corridor in formation. The CEPA is the opening frame, not the full picture.

Banana Port operational:

Transforming DRC trade economics, reducing logistics costs, catalysing inland infrastructure investment into the mining belt. [3]

Mineral value chains deepening:
EU/US due diligence requirements expected to accelerate local processing; refining and certification infrastructure becoming strategic assets. [6, 8]

Energy access expanding:

Government target: 32% electrification by 2030. Significant private capital required; solar, BESS, and mini-grid to scale materially. [9, 10]

UAE as a leading Gulf partner:
CEPA + DP World logistics anchor + Gulf minerals capital suggests UAE trajectory ahead of other GCC states in this cycle. [Thamani assessment]

DMCC–Kinshasa trade flows formalising:
Structured commodity routing through Dubai's free zone infrastructure expected to grow with Congolese export diversification. [Thamani assessment]

COMMERCIAL IMPLICATION

The DRC–UAE corridor is no longer theoretical. The implementation phase has begun.

The question is not whether to engage — it is how to engage intelligently, and when.

BY 2030

The corridor will facilitate enhanced trade, energy access, and mineral value chains — positioning the UAE as one of the DRC's most significant strategic partners.

SOURCE NOTES

References & Attribution

Factual claims, data points, transaction references and project specifications. Thamani commercial judgements appear in Assessment panels and are not listed here.

[1] **UAE–DRC CEPA:** UAE Ministry of Foreign Trade / WAM communiqué, 2 Feb 2026. Trade figure USD 2.9Bn (9 months to Sept 2025); 16.1% growth; 6,000-product figure attributed to Congolese officials. Entry into force not confirmed at publication.

[2] **UAE CEPA Programme:** UAE MoFT CEPA tracker 2025–26. India–UAE 37% growth: TradingView/Reuters, May 2026, citing Minister Al Zeyoudi.

[3] **Banana Port:** DP World press releases (Jan 2022, Mar 2025, Jul 2025). Mota-Engil award March 2025. BII USD 35M: British International Investment, Aug 2024. CEPA communiqué: 600m quay, 30ha yard, 450k TEU.

[4] **Boma Port:** Bankable Africa / DRC government reporting, Feb 2026. MoU: Peters Group Limited.

[5] **IRH / Alphamin Resources:** IRH official announcement Jun–Jul 2025. ~56% stake; USD 367M; completed July 2025. Energy Capital & Power, Jul 2025.

[6] **NG9 / Buenassa; Gécamines–Mercuria:** Energy Capital & Power, Jul 2025 (NG9-Buenassa refinery). AGBI, Feb 2026 (50,000t copper cathode to Gulf).

[7] **DRC Mineral Resources:** USGS Minerals Yearbook; UK Govt Overseas Business Risk DRC (2024); Semafor, Feb 2026. USD 24Tr: widely cited in DRC promotion materials; not a proven reserve valuation.

[8] **U.S.–UAE–DRC Minerals Alignment:** UAE–U.S. minerals framework: Semafor/AGBI, Feb 2026. Project Vault: AGBI, Feb 2026 (USD 12Bn). 2026 Minerals Ministerial: AGBI, Feb 2026. Formal coordination mechanisms not publicly confirmed.

[9] **DRC Energy Access:** World Bank (2020); IEA DRC Energy Outlook; SE4All Africa Hub. <19% national; 41% urban; 1% rural. Hydro potential 100GW+: IEA/IRENA. 3% utilisation: Climate Analytics 1.5°C Explorer.

[10] **DRC PDI:** DRC government PDI, Aug 2021. USD 22Bn power target: NTU–SBF Centre for African Studies, Feb 2022.

[11] **DRC Investment Risk:** U.S. DoS Investment Climate Statement 2025; Coface Country Risk File DRC (Aug 2025); M&J Group DRC Risk Analysis (Nov 2025). 16–18% interest rate: U.S. DoS.

[12] **UAE Non-Oil Trade:** UAE MoFT; AGBI, Feb 2026 — AED 3.8Tr (USD 1Tr) UAE non-oil foreign trade for 2025.

ABOUT THAMANI

A Dubai-Based Commercial Intelligence and Advisory Platform

Thamani Management Consultants FZCO is a UAE-registered strategic advisory firm based in Dubai Silicon Oasis. We focus exclusively on the UAE–Africa investment corridor — with the Democratic Republic of the Congo as our anchor market.

We work with investors, developers, and institutional stakeholders on both sides of the corridor seeking to navigate the commercial, regulatory, and relationship landscape of cross-border market entry.

Market Intelligence

Sector research; stakeholder mapping; regulatory environment analysis

Market Entry Strategy

Structured entry frameworks; local partner ID; institutional engagement

Investment Facilitation

Opportunity validation; counterparty mapping; ANAPI pathway guidance; commercial engagement support

Commercial Execution

On-the-ground facilitation; relationship management; implementation advisory

LET'S TALK

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