

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Titel:	Democratic Republic of the Congo: the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, UDPS) political party, including its political agenda, structure, and leaders; documents issued to its members, including membership cards; treatment of members by the authorities (2022-March 2024).
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16 April 2024

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Democratic Republic of the Congo: the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, UDPS) political party, including its political agenda, structure, and leaders; documents issued to its members, including membership cards; treatment of members by the authorities (2022-March 2024)

1. UDPS

The website of the UDPS states that the party was founded by Étienne Tshisekedi in 1982 (UDPS n.d.a). According to sources, Étienne Tshisekedi's son, Félix Tshisekedi, succeeded his father as leader of the party following his death in 2017 (*Political Handbook of the World* 2023, 20; Al Jazeera 2019-01-24). Sources state that during the national elections held on 30 December 2018, Félix Tshisekedi was elected president "with 38.6 percent of the vote" (*Political Handbook of the World* 2023, 37; France 24 2019-01-10). Sources report that during the 2018 elections, Tshisekedi's UDPS party won 32 seats out of the 500 seats in the National Assembly (US 2023-03-20, 29; France 24 2019-01-12), while the Common Front for Congo (Front commun pour le Congo, FCC) coalition [1], "aligned with former President Kabila, won 335 seats" (US 2023-03-20, 29).

1.1 December 2023 Elections

Sources report that in the December 2023 presidential elections, incumbent UDPS candidate Félix Tshisekedi was elected for a second five-year term as president of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Crisis Group 2024-01-26; AA 2024-01-15). According to a report by International Crisis Group (Crisis Group), "[o]fficial results showed [Félix Tshisekedi] winning a clear victory at polls held on 20 December 2023, though turnout was low and widespread irregularities were reported" (2024-01-26). The same source notes that on 9 January 2024, the Constitutional Court confirmed that Tshisekedi had won 73 percent of the vote (Crisis Group 2024-01-26). Sources report that Tshisekedi's UDPS party won 69 seats during the legislative elections held in December 2023 (Crisis Group 2024-01-26; AA 2024-01-15). The Crisis Group report indicates that Tshisekedi and his allies "scored a major victory" with his coalition, the Union sacrée de la nation (USN) [2], winning "nearly 450 of

the 477 seats currently allocated in the National Assembly" according to "provisional results" of the Independent National Electoral Commission (Commission électorale nationale indépendante, CENI) (2024-01-26). According to a *Jeune Afrique* article, as of January 2024, the house is made up of 477 members, and [translation] "[t]wenty-three seats will be filled in elections in constituencies where results were annulled due to fraud, as well as in the eastern territories of Masisi and Rutshuru, where elections were not held" (*Jeune Afrique* 2024-01-30).

2. Political Agenda

According the UDPS's website, the party's main aspirations and objectives include:

[translation]

1. Promotion of democracy: the UDPS fought for the establishment and maintenance of a democratic political system in the DRC, with an emphasis on transparency, free and fair elections, as well as citizen participation.
2. Defense of human rights: the party has often been a strong defender of human rights in the DRC, opposing abuses and violations of citizens' fundamental rights.
3. Social and economic development: the UDPS has also sought to promote social and economic progress in the DRC, with an emphasis on improving living conditions, job creation, education and access to healthcare for all Congolese.
4. Political accountability: the party seeks to hold political leaders accountable, fight corruption, and establish a more transparent and accountable governance. (UDPS n.d.b)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a UDPS representative stated that the party's aim is to [translation] "promote democratic values and social progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and abroad," and to "act in accordance with the guidelines and principles of the party" (UDPS 2024-03-29).

3. Structure and Leaders

The UDPS representative explained that the party operates using a hierarchical model that is organized into national and local bodies (2024-04-06). The same source stated that bodies at the national level are [translation] "often" made up of "an executive office, a national council and various specialized departments" and "oversee and coordinate activities" nationally, while local bodies might include "provincial committees," "communal chapters" (sections communales), and local cells depending on the region (UDPS 2024-04-06).

According to the UDPS's party statutes passed in 2013, the Congress is the highest body of the UDPS and is made up of members from the national bodies which include the Party Presidency and the Democratic Party Convention (UDPS 2013-01-25, Art. 15, 17). According to Article 22, the Party Presidency is made up of:

[translation]

The President of the Party;

The Secretary General of the Party;

The National Secretaries, heads of departments;

The General Treasurer. (UDPS 2013-01-25, Art. 22)

According to Article 30, the Democratic Party Convention is made up of:

[translation]

- National Members and Senators elected on the Party list;
- Ministers and Party Agents;
- the Party Presidency;
- Presidents of Federal Committees;
- Presidents of the Federal Democratic Conventions;
- President of the Party School;
- President of the Women's League;
- President of the Youth League;
- Five well-known figures per province, designated by the President of the Party (UDPS 2013-01-25, Art. 22, 30).

Sources mention that, at the national level, Félix Tshisekedi is the party's President (*Political Handbook of the World* 2023, 37; AA 2024-01-15), and Augustin Kabuya is the party's General Secretary (UDPS n.d.c; RFI 2023-08-11).

4. Documents Issued to UDPS Members

According to the UDPS representative, membership cards (*cartes de membre*) [translation] "are often given to new members after they have completed the membership process and have paid any necessary dues" (2024-03-29). The same source stated that party membership cards are [translation] "generally" issued by the local chapters or offices responsible for managing membership matters (UDPS 2024-03-29).

In follow-up correspondence with the Research Directorate, the UDPS representative stated that the party started issuing biometric cards in 2017 (2024-04-06). The representative explained that the difference between the two cards is [translation] "the integration of biometric data such as fingerprints or facial recognition, which strengthens member identification and security" (2024-04-06). The same source indicated that non-biometric cards are [translation] "still in circulation" and noted that both the biometric and non-biometric cards are accepted as membership cards (UDPS 2024-04-10).

A sample of a non-biometric UDPS-Canada member card is attached to this Response (Attachment 1).

4.1 Obtaining a UDPS Membership Card from Within the DRC

The UDPS representative indicated that the requirements and procedure for obtaining a UDPS membership card in the DRC [translation] "may vary according to local practices and the instructions of party officials in each region," but that "in general," those interested in

applying can do so by completing the membership form, providing their personal details, and "sometimes" giving references from existing members (2024-03-29).

A sample of the UDPS-Canada membership form is attached to this Response (Attachment 2).

The UDPS representative provided the link to a 2010 article from the UDPS website that provides information about membership cards (2024-03-29); the article lists the following requirements to obtain a UDPS membership card:

[translation]

- Be a citizen of the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- Be at least 18 years old;
- Complete and sign a membership form;
- Purchase and hold the membership card regularly;
- Pay monthly and one-time dues;
- Participate in party activities and protests;
- Respect and protect the party's heritage (2010-06-14).

The same source notes that once the requirements are met the specific details on the "issuance procedure can be obtained from local offices or UDPS representatives" (UDPS 2010-06-14).

The UDPS representative indicated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that the membership cards [translation] "generally" include the party's name, the individual's name and photograph, as well as other "identifying information" (UDPS 2024-03-29). According to the 2010 UDPS article on membership cards, the card contains the following information:

[translation]

- Member's first and last name;
- Membership number;
- Date of issuance;
- Expiry date (if applicable);
- The UDPS name and logo;
- Eventually, a photo of the member (UDPS 2010-06-14).

4.2 Obtaining a UDPS Membership Card from Abroad

The UDPS representative explained that for applicants living abroad, membership procedures may differ depending on the structure established by the UDPS offices in foreign countries and that those interested can contact UDPS representatives or international chapters (UDPS 2024-03-29).

The UDPS USA Federation (UDPS Fédération USA, UDPS-USA) website has an online membership registration form which indicates that there is a ten dollar (USD) [C\$13.74] monthly subscription fee to become an official member, and a membership card will be included (UDPS-USA n.d.).

Further information on the requirements and procedure to obtain a UDPS membership card abroad could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4.3 Other Documents Issued to UDPS Members

According to the UDPS representative, the party has the ability to provide its members with various documents, including membership certificates or documents that confirm their involvement in events or activities organized by the party (2024-03-29). Similarly, the 2010 UDPS article indicates that other documents issued by the party include [translation] "certificates of participation in training, certificates of participation in party events, letters of recommendation for political or social activities, etc." (2010-06-14). The same article notes that the appearance of those documents [translation] "may vary depending on their nature and purpose and that specific information on other documents issued to members should be sought by contacting the relevant local UDPS offices" (UDPS 2010-06-14).

A sample of a UDPS-Canada membership certificate is attached to this Response (Attachment 3).

5. Treatment of Members by Authorities

Media sources report that on 5 February 2022, President Tshisekedi's security advisor was arrested on suspicion for [translation] "conspiracy" against "the head of state" (Actualite.cd 2022-06-04; *Jeune Afrique* 2022-08-16). According to an article by *Jeune Afrique*, the individual was arrested along with three of his employees and, after unsuccessful requests for his release, he was granted provisional release due to his state of health by the High Military Court on 16 August 2022 (*Jeune Afrique* 2022-08-16).

An article by *Jeune Afrique* states that on 14 January 2022, Jean-Marc Kabund, the first vice-president of the UDPS party, announced his resignation on X [formerly Twitter] without offering an explanation (2022-01-14). Actualite.cd, a Congolese news website, reports that on 29 January 2022, the party's internal Democratic Party Convention held a disciplinary meeting in regard to Kabund's resignation and expelled him from the UDPS (2022-01-29). According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022*, during a July 2022 press conference, Kabund "called President Tshisekedi 'irresponsible' and 'a public danger' and accused government officials of lying, manipulation, embezzlement of public funds, and corruption"; Kabund was arrested on August 9 for "contempt of the head of state, defamation, and spreading false rumors" (US 2023-03-20, 13). The same source states that though a court ruled that Kabund be placed under house arrest on 12 August 2022, he remained held at Makala Central Prison as of November 2022 (US 2023-03-20, 13). A Reuters article reports that a DRC high court sentenced Kabund to seven years in prison for charges including "spreading false rumours and insulting the

head of state" (Reuters 2023-09-13). The same source adds that Kabund was sentenced by one of the DRC's highest courts, the Court of Cassation, "which does not allow appeals" (Reuters 2023-09-13).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Common Front for Congo (Front commun pour le Congo, FCC) is one of three "main coalitions" that emerged in 2018, and comprises

- the People's Party for Reconciliation and Development (Parti du peuple pour la réconciliation et le développement, PPRD),
- the Alliance of Democratic Forces of the Congo (Alliance des forces démocratiques du Congo, AFDC),
- the People's Party for Peace and Democracy (Parti populaire pour la paix et la démocratie, PPPD),
- a number of "smaller parties" (*Political Handbook of the World* 2023, 34, 35).

[2] Established in April 2023, the Sacred Union of the Nation (Union sacrée de la nation, USN) [translation] "is a coalition of parties supporting President Felix Tshisekedi's candidacy for re-election in the December [2023]" (AFP 2023-04-30).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: UDPS – Calgary Chapter; UDPS – Federation in South Africa.

Internet sites, including: 7sur7.cd; Africanews; *The Africa Report*; Agence congolaise de Presse; Austrian Red Cross – ecoi.net; Human Rights Watch; MediaCongo.net; Radio Okapi; United Kingdom – Home Office; US – CIA, Congressional Research Service.

Attachments

1. Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS). N.d. Sample of a UDPS-Canada membership card. Sent to the Research Directorate by a deputy representative of UDPS-Canada, 2018-07-09. Translated in English by the Translation Bureau, Public Services and Procurement Canada.
2. Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS). N.d. Sample UDPS-Canada membership form. Sent to the Research Directorate by a deputy representative of UDPS-Canada, 2018-06-22. Translated in English by the Translation Bureau, Public Services and Procurement Canada.
3. Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS). N.d. Sample of a UDPS-Canada membership certificate. Sent to the Research Directorate by a representative and federal president of UDPS-Canada, 2018-07-18. Translated in English by the Translation Bureau, Public Services and Procurement Canada.

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