

# Glencore first miner to export cobalt under new DRC quotas

Glencore has become the first miner to export cobalt under the Democratic Republic of Congo's new quotas, sending a small initial shipment to test the system, one government source and two trade sources familiar with the matter told *Reuters*.

By Ange Kasongo, Pratima Desai and Maxwell Akalaare Adombila 11 Dec 2025



Image credit: Reuters/Jonny Hogg/File Photo

Congo cleared Glencore's shipment this week pending payment of a 10% royalty, the government source said, marking the beginning of a return to exports after a months-long ban that has driven cobalt prices sharply higher and squeezed availability of the metal needed for electric vehicles.

The central African country accounts for more than 70% of global mined production, which is estimated by analysts at around 280,000 metric tonnes this year. The system, launched on 16 October, has allocated a quota of 18,125 metric tonnes for the fourth quarter and will cap annual exports at 96,600 tons from 2026.

Cobalt traders initially expected shipments to smelters by January after Congo introduced the quota system but have since decided it will take longer, two separate trade sources said. The first full-sized shipment from Congo is now expected by April.



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## Largest allocations

China's CMOC and Glencore, the world's two largest cobalt-producing companies, received the largest quota allocations. CMOC's fourth-quarter quota is 6,650 tonnes, and Glencore's is 3,925 tonnes.

Congo's regulator ARECOMS retains 10% for its strategic reserve.

CMOC's Tenke Fungurume Mining has also started the processes to start exports, the government source said.

Glencore declined to comment. CMOC did not immediately respond to the request for comments. Neither did ARECOMS and Congo's mines ministry.

"We authorised the release of the first shipment by Glencore as a pilot process. However, the procedure is still underway to determine the quality and reach a final decision on the quantity that will be exported," the government source said. The 10% royalty will be paid after the quality determination.

"Once someone does a first export, the second will become much easier," the source added. None of the sources could be named because they were not authorised to speak publicly on the issue.

While Congo's government has threatened penalties for non-compliance, shipments have yet to begin as exporters struggle with unclear procedures and payment requirements.



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## Mining lobby

*Reuters* previously reported that the country's mining lobby called for urgent talks to clarify legal ambiguities and compliance hurdles. It said the new requirements — including a 10% royalty prepayment within 48 hours and a compliance certificate before any cargo moves — could delay exports and disrupt global battery supply chains.

Glencore, which operates the Mutanda and Katanga mines in Congo, favoured a quota-based export system while CMOC had sought a full lifting of the ban.

Under the new rules, exporters must notify authorities, prepare batches for sampling and wait for lab tests to certify quality and volumes before royalties are calculated and paid.

Without proof of payment, a cargo cannot move.

Cobalt metal prices are trading around \$24 a lb or \$52,900 a tonne. That compares with nine-year lows around \$10 a lb in February when Congo announced the suspension of cobalt exports.

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