



**Statement of Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) to the 57th Session of the African
Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Banjul**

November 2015

Madame Chairperson

Commissioners,

State delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) is a pan African civil society membership organization composed of some of leading freedom expression and right to information organizations in Africa would to thank you for this opportunity to address the 57th session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

AFIC would like to join the others participating in this session to congratulate Madam Chairperson and the new bureau on their election.

We would also like to reiterate our resolve to support the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Information in Africa and the ACHPR in general to advance freedom of expression and access to information on the continent.

In your report Madam Chairperson, you have reiterated that, the right to freedom of information has been shown to be instrumental in the realization of other fundamental rights; to eradicating corruption; and it is also fundamental to the functioning of democracy. Freedom of information can also be a key tool in conflict prevention; openness and transparency and a free exchange of information engender trust between institutions/ governments and its citizens.

We thank you Madam Chairperson for your advocacy efforts to fast track the adoption of Access to Information Laws particularly in Senegal and Kenya.

Madam Chair person,

The requirement to have legislation to give, facilitate the right to information cannot be overstated. Of the 54 African countries only 17 African countries in Africa have access to information legislation. These are South Africa, Liberia, Uganda, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Guinea-Conakry, Niger, Angola and Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Corte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Mozambique, Sudan and Burkina Faso. It is disappointing to note that these do not even make up a third of the continent.

We applaud Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso who have appeared before the commission for being among the few African countries that have access to information laws. We call

on the two countries to strengthen the internal mechanisms for the implementation of these important legislation.

While we commend the numerous strides taken by Algeria and Kenya to improve ATI, we are concerned that these countries have not yet adopted comprehensive ATI laws or regulations to give effect the right to ATI.

Chair Person,

Many African countries are yet to ratify African international instruments that reinforce governance and the right to access information. These are the African Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, the African Youth Charter, African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration, African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance; the African Charter on Statistics and the African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Developments.

On a separate note we would also like to appreciate civil society organizations and government bodies around the Africa and many parts of the world who have adopted 28 September as International Right to Know Day. More so, on October 19th 2015, the Executive Board of UNESCO adopted a resolution containing a recommendation to the General Conference to adopt September 28 as International Access to Information Day.

We call upon ACHPR to:

1. Urge AU member states to adopt and implement national Access to Information laws in compliance with the model law on ATI in Africa.

2. Encourage African States to ratify all the African instruments that provide for the access to information.
3. Pass a resolution requesting the AU Heads of State Summit in 2016 to adopt September 28 as an International Right to Information Day

This statement is supported by ARTICLE 19 and other AFIC members