



STATEMENT ON THE DELAY IN PASSING FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL IN GHANA

February 2, 2011

Immediate Release

The Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC), a pan-African civil society organization promoting the right of access to information on the African continent is deeply concerned and deplores the delay to pass the long-awaited Freedom of Information Bill by the Parliament of Ghana.

This bill was been in parliament since February 2010; a move that raised the hopes and aspirations of the Ghanaian people to finally enjoy their fundamental right of freedom of access to information held by public bodies.

This delay by the Ghanaian parliament totally contradicts the spirit and character of relevant international standards and instruments that guarantee citizens' right of access to public information to which Ghana subscribes; notably The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and The Commonwealth Principles on Freedom of Information.

Furthermore, the delay in adopting a freedom of information legislation contradicts commitments made by senior government including ministers during the Africa Regional Meeting organized by the Carter Centre in Accra in February 2010. The Government Ghana represented by the Hon. Minister of Justice committed to:

'Accept responsibility and take leadership by ensuring the right of access to information and fulfilling existing constitutional provisions for the right by:

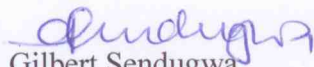
- a. enacting and implementing comprehensive legislation;*
- b. repealing, amending or reforming all laws and administrative measures inconsistent with the right of access to information; and*
- c. assuring adequate budgets for full and effective implementation'.*

A comprehensive access to information law serves the essential goals of deepening freedom, democracy, strengthening political stability and promoting socio-economic justice and sustainable development.

In view of the above, AFIC calls upon:

1. His Excellency John Atta Mills to show leadership and ensure the Ghanaian Parliament assumes its responsibly and make the Freedom of Information Bill a reality for the Ghanaian people;
2. Ghana's law makers to stop any feet dragging over the passage of this Bill.
3. Ghana's civil society organisations to be united in reminding law makers of their obligations to the people and further step up vigilance against the introduction of any clauses that complicate free access to information.

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