



STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2012

Another Milestone for the Campaign on Access to Information

The African Platform on Access to Information (APAI) working group welcomes the commencement of the 51st session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul (the Commission), the Gambia, as well as welcoming a resolution from the preceding NGO Forum supporting the African Platform on Access to Information declaration.

The working group's attendance at the commission marks the next major step in the campaign, which aims to ensure that access to information is a right enjoyed by all African citizens. The group will call upon the Commission to support the African Platform on Access to Information declaration, as well as recognizing September 28th as International Right to Information day, a day which is already widely supported by a number of civil society organisations around the world.

Events preceding the session included the NGO forum, organized by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, which was attended by hundreds of civil society organisations, representing various different interests in Africa.

During the event, one of the major topics of discussion was Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, with the African Platform on Access to Information convening a panel which dealt with a variety of different issues, such as the practical importance use and of access to information in different sectors, access to information and the safety of journalists, and updating the forum on the progress of the campaign. Panelists included representatives from the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), Article 19, Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC), Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), and Afrimap.

The Access to Information' panel was followed by a panel on the Extractive industries, on which Gilbert Sendugwa from the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) again spoke to the forum, ascribing many of the problems associated with the extractive industries in terms of transparency and accountability to a lack of adequate access to information.

At the closing session of the Forum hundreds of members of civil society came together to recommend a number of resolutions for adoption by the forum. Amongst the resolutions, the forum called upon the commission to recognize September 28th as International Right to Know day, as well as a call on ACHPR for an expansion of article IV of the Declaration of Principles of Expression in Africa to incorporate the principles of the African Platform on Access to Information Declaration.

Encouraged by the resolution from the NGO forum the group will now call upon the ACHPR to:

"Pass a resolution authorizing the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa to expand Part IV of the Declaration of Freedom of Expression in Africa to include principles of APAI Declaration.

Pass a resolution requesting the AU Heads of State Summit of January 2012 to adopt September 28 as an International Right to Information Day

Urge AU member states to adopt and implement national Access to Information laws that comply with the APAI Declaration and the model law on ATI developed by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Information in Africa.

Pass a resolution requesting the African Union Summit of January 2012 to initiate an Experts meeting to develop a continental wide instrument on the right of Access to Information."

It is hoped that the commission will show its support to the campaign by adopting the resolution and taking the declaration forward to the next AU summit in July 2012.

For more information on the campaign contact:

Karen Mohan, APAI Secretariat, Media Institute of Southern Africa, MISA Regional Secretariat, 21 Johann Albrecht Str., Windhoek, Namibia, Tel. +264 61 232975, Fax. +264 61 248016, Email: apai@misa.org, www.pacaia.org, www.windhoekplus20.org, www.africanplatform.org

Notes to Editors:

Media Contact West Africa: Fatou Jagne, Senghore- Representative, Article 19, Dakar, Senegal, West Africa, fatou@article19.org

Media Contact East Africa: Gilbert Sendugwa, Coordinator and Head of Secretariat, Africa Freedom of Information Centre, Kampala, Uganda, West Africa, gilbert@africafoicentre.org