

“Open Letter by Members of Global Openness Community welcoming President Obama's Initiative on Transparency”

The undersigned organizations, which work around the world to promote the right of access to information, welcome the steps taken by President Barack Obama on his first day in office to reverse recent trends and to promote high standards of openness in government. We particularly welcome the call for a clear presumption in favor of disclosure of information, so that “in the face of doubt, openness prevails”. We also welcome the inclusion, within this presumption, of an affirmative obligation on public bodies to disclose information rapidly and in forms that the public can readily find and use. Proactive disclosure is recognized internationally as an essential element of the right of access to information, along with the right to request and receive information.

President Obama has demonstrated global leadership on this issue, signaling the fundamental importance of open government in a democracy. We call on governments around the world to take similar action to promote transparency and respect for the right of access to information.

We also urge President Obama to ensure that his executive orders are given full effect, in accordance with their language and purpose. Ensuring strong implementation of these standards will set a high benchmark to inspire governments around the world.

Yours sincerely,

Access Info Europe, Helen Darbishire, Executive Director (Spain)

Access to Information Programme, Gergana Jouleva, Executive Director (Bulgaria)

Ad IDEM/Canadian Media Lawyers Association, Paul Schabas, President (Canada)

American Civil Liberties Union, Caroline Fredrickson, Washington Legislative Office, Director (USA)

Arab Freedom of Information Network, Said Essoulami, Executive Director

ARTICLE 19, Toby Mendel, Senior Legal Counsel

Asociación por los Derechos Civiles, Roberto Saba, Executive Director (Argentina)

Association for Freedom of Thoughts and Expression, Mohamed Omran (Egypt)

Bank Information Center, Chad Dobson, Executive Director (USA)

BilgiEdinmeHakki.Org, Dr. Yaman Akdeniz, Director (Turkey)

Campaign for Freedom of Information, Maurice Frankel, Director (UK)

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Center for Development and Democratization of Institutions, Ilir Aliaj, Executive Director (Albania)

Center for Independent Journalism, Ioana Avadani, Executive Director (Romania)

Center for Promotion of Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, Vasile Spinei, President (Moldova)

Center of Access to Public Information, Edison Lanza, Director (Uruguay)

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Information Commissioner of Republic of Slovenia, Natasa Pirc, Information Commissioner (Slovenia)
Institute for Information Freedom Development in Russia, Ivan Pavlov, Lawyer and Chairman (Russia)
Instituto Prensa y Sociedad, Andrés Mejía (Colombia)
Instituto Prensa y Sociedad, Javier Casas (Peru)
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Movement for Freedom of Information in Israel, Roy Peled, Executive Director (Israel)
National Freedom of Information Coalition, Charles Davis, Executive Director (USA)
National Security Archive, Tom Blanton, Director (USA)
New York State Committee on Open Government, Robert J. Freeman, Executive Director (USA)
Open Society Institute, Aryeh Neier, President (USA)
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Pro Media, Klime Babunski (Macedonia)
PROETICA - Transparency International, Cecilia Blondet, Executive Director (Peru)
PROVIDUS, Linda Austere, Policy Researcher (Latvia)
Public Citizen, Adina Rosenbaum, Attorney (USA)
Right to Know Coalition of Nova Scotia, Darce Fardy, President (Canada)
Society for Democratic Initiatives, Emmanuel Saffa Abdulai, Executive Director (Sierra Leone)
Statewatch, Tony Bunyan, Director
Sunshine Week, Debra Gersh Hernandez, Coordinator (USA)
Sustentia, Carlos Cordero, Executive Director (Spain)
The Canadian Association of Professional Access and Privacy Administrators, Sharon Polsky, National Chair (Canada)

Transparency International - Secretariat, Andrea Figari, Global Programmes Manager (Germany)
Transparency International Anti-corruption Center, Amalia Kostanyan, Chairwoman (Armenia)
Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina, Aleksandra Martinovic, Member of the Board of Directors (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Transparency International Croatia, Zorislav Antun Petrović, President (Croatia)
Transparency International Israel, Galia Sagi, CEO (Israel)
Transparency International Russia, Marina Savintseva, Programme Co-ordinator (Russia)
Transparency International Slovakia, Emilia Beblava, President (Slovakia)
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