



CONCEPT NOTE

14th International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC)

“Bridging Information Across Nations: Concretizing the Global Role of Access to Information for Democratic Preservation, Inclusivity, and Development”

For more than seven (7) decades since the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the significance of the right to access information has been widely acknowledged on a global scale. Since then, many countries have operationalized their right to information through pertinent national legislations¹ which emanated the development of its dynamic practice.


Through the years, access to information (ATI) has been regarded as a cornerstone of a nation’s democracy. The right to access and the right to information are cognate human rights, resting on the premise that informed and critical citizens are in the best position to promote, protect, and defend the values of a democratic society. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan once avowed, “If information and knowledge are central to democracy, they are the conditions for development”². Information has become a precursor for citizen’s meaningful participation and a vital resource for national development.

The 14th edition of the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) shall weave the emerging narratives of the vibrant global ATI praxis, with a special focus on the Asia-Pacific experiences and the post-COVID-19 world order. It will be an exploration of the various developments, challenges, and opportunities of the distinct ATI experiences and practices of the host region, which have thrived against the background of its complex and diverse political, cultural, and socio-economic landscapes. With the heightened recognition of ATI as a field of practice and the growing number of “young” and dynamic ATI bodies, ICIC is a venue to showcase the strong international network promoting transparency and access to information, which will support ATI institutionalization efforts in Asia-Pacific and the Global South at large.

¹ which Riegner (2017) coined as “global explosion of freedom of information.”

Riegner, Michael. “Access to Information as a Human Right and Constitutional Guarantee. A Comparative Perspective.” *Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 50, no. 4 (2017): 332–66. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26540817>.

² “‘IF INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE ARE CENTRAL TO DEMOCRACY, THEY ARE CONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT’, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL.” Press Release SG/SM/6268, June 23, 1997. United Nations.



As we look through Asia's vantage, the shift in our perspective facilitates an understanding of the ambiguous nature of the changes and development that define our current societal evolution. The advancements that we have contributed in the ATI practice has established the layers of actors, networks, and approaches that set the current normative structure, and examining them as components of complex systems provides us a wide perspective in addressing the imminent challenges of our time such as those related to the modern conditions of democratization, inclusion, and development.

As ATI in the twenty-first century reinforces collaboration and co-evolution between and among the states and its stakeholders, ICIC builds on these interactions and strives to offer an understanding of the dynamics of these networks. The master presentations, workshops, plenary and parallel sessions shall help reframe the challenges and solutions on ATI mechanisms from the diverse perspectives of key actors. The discussions shall also cut across ATI-related concerns from different sectors of society, especially the disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized.

As the conference aims to ingeminate the vital role of information commissioners in promoting and safeguarding the people's right to information, the event shall aid in the development of a framework for collaborative global governance for public service delivery across all levels and domains of government and society. With the role of networks and linkages becoming more apparent and as conceptual intricacies have been extricated through cooperative discourse, ATI implementing bodies can adapt and innovate for long-term sustainability in the face of the global VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) situation. The identified gaps in policy and practice will be our space of opportunities for international cooperation, which in turn will manifest in our domestic pursuit of truth, trust, and transparency.

Leveraging on globalization, the ICIC will continuously advance its ATI and transparency initiatives by working with its members in identifying the best and most innovative practices around the world as we aspire for the realization of SDG 16.10.2³.

³ Attainment of peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16) calls for ensuring of public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (Target 16) with a particular indicator based on the number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information (Indicator 2).

https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sdg_indicator_16101_tracking_progress_accesstoinfo.pdf

