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Congo: CLD Urges Speedy Passage of Right to Information Law

CLD has issued a letter to MPs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) urging speedy passage of the proposed Law on Access to Information (Loi sur l'accès à l'information). Although the right to information is protected under DRC's 2006 constitution, this law would for the first time give practical effect to that guarantee.

CLD welcomes the draft Law's positive features, such as its wide scope of application and user-friendly procedural rules. However, the proposed law is far from perfect. The regime of exceptions, found in Articles 2 and 5-11 of the draft Law, should be drafted more clearly and narrowly, so as to avoid the risk of public bodies using flexible exceptions to deny access to information which is not sensitive. CLD also notes that the law lacks a proper oversight mechanism, which is critical to ensuring the proper implementation of the right to information in the DRC.

"Despite these shortcomings, we see the law as an important opportunity for the DRC to move forward in terms of respect for human rights and to strengthen democratic accountability for its people," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *"We urge the government to act without delay and ensure the speedy passage of the Law on Access to Information."*

CLD's letter also notes that Africa remains one of the world's weaker performing regions in terms of right to information legislation, but that is beginning to change. Over the past five years, the number of African right to information laws has more than quadrupled. CLD hopes that the DRC will continue this positive trend towards greater openness and transparency across the continent.

The letter is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/congo-cld-urges-speedy-passage-of-right-to-information-law/>.

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