



25 September 2024 – for immediate release

Principles on Right to Information for Small Island Developing States

Today, as a pre-International Right to Know Day event, the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) is releasing its Principles on Right to Information for Small Island Developing States: The Case of the Pacific. The right to access information held by public authorities, or the right to information (RTI), is a human right which should be respected by all States, large or small. And yet small population countries face particular challenges in this area, in particular in putting in place the needed administrative structures. The CLD Principles represent the first attempt to look at how traditional approaches to delivering RTI can be adapted so as to be practical for very small States while still respecting human rights standards.

“A recent review by CLD showed that of the 56 UN Member States which still lack RTI laws, 17 or nearly one-third have a population of less than one million, illustrating the challenges these States face in adopting such laws”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. “Our Principles provide guidance to these States as to how to adapt RTI laws to make them more practical for small bureaucracies, and also on how to streamline implementation.”

A key idea in the Principles is that instead of appointing separate information officers in each public authority to respond to requests, a central unit can do this for the whole of the government, thereby both reducing the strain on the bureaucracy and concentrating expertise. Such a central unit can take on other roles, such as reporting centrally on the processing of requests by the whole of the government and leading on the proactive publication of information for the whole of government. The Principles also set out the key powers oversight bodies need to process information appeals, opening the way for allocating this role to an existing body rather than creating additional administrative structures.

CLD calls on all small States which have not yet done so to adopt RTI laws, and encourages them to reach out to us for assistance in this endeavour. We have other support materials for this work, such as legal drafting proposals which implement the recommendations in the Principles.

The Principles are available [here](#).

For further information, please contact:

Toby Mendel
Executive Director
Centre for Law and Democracy
Email: toby@law-democracy.org
+1 902 431-3686
www.law-democracy.org
twitter: @law_democracy