

The Information Commissioner for Bermuda,

Recalling that the right to information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression, as recognized by Resolution 59 of the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 1946,

Noting that the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) highlights good governance as being central to development and the eradication of poverty, and acknowledging that press freedom and the right to know are essential to promoting democracy and ensuring respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which guarantees that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), which includes the right of access to information held by public bodies,

Reaffirming the principles, declarations and recommendations on the right to information and freedom of expression made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the Brisbane Declaration on “Freedom of Information: the Right to Know” (2010), the Maputo Declaration on “Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Empowerment of People” (2008), and the Dakar Declaration on “Media and Good Governance” (2005), among others,

Recognising the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017), and related recommendations, which recommend that governments: “develop, adopt and implement open government strategies and initiatives that promote the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation in designing and delivering public policies and services, in an open and inclusive manner,

Recognising the African Platform on Access to Information Declaration, adopted at the Pan-African Conference on Access to Information (2011), which established principles that play a crucial role in development, democracy, equality and the delivery of public services,

Defining the right to information as the right of everyone to access information held by public bodies at all levels, local, national and international,

Reaffirming that the right to information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression, and that both are fundamental underpinnings of democracy and all other rights and freedoms,

Recognizing the potential of information and communication technologies, when accessible to all, to facilitate full realization of the right to information for all people,

Highlighting that the right to information is instrumental to the realization of people's empowerment, and for promoting the equality of all groups in society,

Emphasizing that the right to information is crucial for informed decision-making, for participation in democratic life, for monitoring of public actions, and for enhancing transparency and accountability, and represents a powerful tool to fight corruption,

Recognising that the right to information is critical to building public trust and is a key contributor to achieving different policy outcomes in diverse spheres of public life, including public sector integrity, public sector modernization, civic freedom, digital government, public procurement, public sector innovation and growth, and public financial management and human resource management,

Recognising that public stakeholder participation increases government accountability, broadens the public's empowerment and influence, builds civic capacity, improves evidence-based policy and decision making, reduces implementation costs, and embraces wider networks for innovation in policy making and service delivery,

Considering that the right to access public information is a catalyst for good governance, democracy, trust and inclusive growth,

Affirming that the good governance principles underlying the right to public information are progressively changing the relationship between the public and public officials throughout the world in a manner that is more dynamic, mutually beneficial and based on reciprocal trust,

Recognising that the right to information can only be effectively exercised, implemented, and enforced based on laws that are in accordance with international standards,

Encouraged that nearly 120 countries around the world have adopted comprehensive national access to information laws or regulations,

Recognising that the Public Access to Information Act 2010 in Bermuda is a comprehensive access to public information law affording rights to Bermudians and residents of Bermuda,

Underscoring that the right to public information under the PATI Act furthers the empowerment of people in Bermuda and strengthens democracy,

Aware that the implementation of access to public information in Bermuda signifies a cultural shift towards greater openness, accountability, and public engagement,

Noting that the PATI Act's potential for strengthening good governance will only be realised through its regular use by Bermudians and residents of Bermuda making PATI requests,

Welcoming the members of the public, public officers, public bodies and political leadership that have embraced the benefits of the PATI Act, and

Recognising that civil society organizations and government bodies throughout the world have adopted and currently celebrate the 28th of September as 'International Right to Know Day',

Declares and

1. **Commits** to the mandate of the Information Commissioner to promote public access to information in Bermuda and to ensuring public access to information to the greatest extent possible under the provisions of the PATI Act; and
2. **Invites** all public authorities in Bermuda to celebrate International Right to Know Day in a manner which each considers most appropriate; and
3. **Encourages** Bermudians and residents of Bermuda to embrace their rights under the Public Access to Information Act 2010 and remain informed, included and involved members of the community.

Declared this day on Monday, the 23rd of September 2019



Gitanjali S. Gutierrez
Information Commissioner for Bermuda