



# Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

New Delhi, India. London, UK. Accra, Ghana  
NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

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Dr The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam  
Prime Minister  
Prime Minister's Office  
New Treasury Building  
Port-Louis  
Mauritius

April 26, 2011

Dear Sir,

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, nonpartisan, international non-government organisation mandated to ensure the practical realisation of human rights in the lives of the people in the Commonwealth. CHRI's Access to Information programme assists Commonwealth member states to develop strong right to information (RTI) laws and to implement them effectively.

In 2005, in his address to the newly elected Parliament, the President of Mauritius outlined the Government Programme for the years 2005-2010. A prominent item on this programme was the enactment of access to information legislation spelt out at paragraph 261 as follows:

*"My Government will provide citizens with a right of access to personal information held by State agencies and to information relating to government business by enacting a Freedom of Information Act."*

Soon after, CHRI wrote to you offering assistance on drafting a Freedom of Information law. Later in 2006 and 2007 we wrote to the Hon'ble Minister for Information offering similar assistance and also enquiring about the progress made in delivering on this promise of your Government. However we have not received even an acknowledgement of receipt of our letter from either office. There is little information in the public domain in the Commonwealth about the progress made on this promise of instituting FOI legislation.

We congratulate you on your re-election as the Prime Minister of Mauritius. We have read the Hon'ble President's speech to Parliament outlining the Government Programme for the years 2010-2015 with great interest. It is very encouraging that the Government intends to deepen democracy by promoting higher norms of governance including transparency and accountability in public affairs. The current programme however does not reiterate the specific promise of enacting Freedom of Information legislation that was made in the previous programme.

We urge your Government to initiate efforts to enact an effective Freedom of Information law that not only gives people in Mauritius the right to access their personal information held by public authorities, but also guarantees access to public information created or held by Government. A well crafted Freedom of Information law can serve as a sound basis for a more transparent and accountable government.

I would like to offer your Government our expertise and services for designing an information access regime in Mauritius that is effective, citizen-friendly and compliant with international best practice standards. We have promoted the idea and practice of the freedom of information (also known as the Right to Information) across South Asia Commonwealth Africa and the Pacific. We have been closely involved with the process building capacity of both civil society and governments to draft and implement RTI laws in India, Bangladesh and Ghana. We are currently working with partners in Africa to develop a model access to information law. We have provided detailed comments and recommendations for improving the RTI Bills in the Maldives, Tanzania and Botswana in recent years. In India we were closely involved with the implementation of the RTI Act and we now monitor compliance in public authorities and the performance of adjudicatory bodies under this law. We can bring all of this experience to the discussion table as and when Mauritius plans to develop its own RTI law.

Once again, I would like to congratulate you on committing your Government towards promoting transparency and accountability in your Government. I look forward to hearing from you about your Government's plans to deliver on this promise. Please feel free to contact me by email at [maja.daruwala@gmail.com](mailto:maja.daruwala@gmail.com) or the Access to Information team of CHRI at [Venkatesh@humanrightsinitiative.org](mailto:Venkatesh@humanrightsinitiative.org). I would appreciate an early response to this letter.

Yours sincerely

Maja Daruwala  
Director