

SENATE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL PRESENTS

*Source: David Banisar
3 October 2006*

The Senate Ad hoc Committee on the Freedom of Information Bill today laid its report before the Senate. The Committee's Chairman, Senator Victor Ndoma-Egba (SAN), presented the report during the day's plenary session.

The laying of the report before the Senate implies that the Senate Ad hoc Committee, which was given the responsibility of working on the Bill on March 14, this year, has completed the assignment given to it by the upper chamber of the National Assembly.

With the presentation of the report, Senator Ndoma-Egba is hopeful the Senate would begin debates on the Bill on Tuesday, 10 October, 2006 when the third reading is expected to take place. This would involve a clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill and discussion of the Committee's report. The Bill has thus entered its final stage in the Senate and looks set to be adopted by the body in a matter of weeks.

The Freedom of Information Bill has been pending before the National Assembly since the beginning of this present political dispensation in 1999. The Bill was passed by the House of Representative in August 2004 and transmitted to the Senate in the same year. In the Senate, the Bill went through a first reading on November 23, 2004 while the second reading was held on February 22, 2005 before the Bill was committed to the Senate Committee on Information and National Orientation, Chaired by Senator Tawar Wada. The Bill went through a public hearing on April 26, 2005.

When the Information Committee failed to present its report to the Senate at the scheduled time, Senate President Ken Nnamani setup a six-member Ad hoc Committee to work on the Bill. The Ad hoc Committee on the Freedom of Information Bill, which was chaired by Senator Victor Ndoma-Egba, also had as members Senator Nuhu Aliyu, Senator Timothy Adudu, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma, Senator Adeleke Mamora and Senator Jibril Aminu.