

## **DECLARATION BY FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION EXPERT**

Press Release by ARTICLE 19, 6 December 2004

The three specialised mandates for promoting freedom of expression at the UN, OSCE and OAS – the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression – today issued a Joint Declaration addressing access to information and secrecy laws. The Declaration calls on States to adopt access to information laws establishing a presumption of openness, based on the principle of maximum disclosure, and to amend their secrecy laws to ensure that they do not undermine access to information. Among other things, the Declaration calls on States to:

- ensure that exceptions to the right of access are clear and narrow;
- put in place independent appeals mechanisms for any refusals to disclose;
- address the culture of secrecy within government;
- amend secrecy laws as necessary so journalists and others are not liable
- further dissemination in the public interest of secret information that has been leaked to them; and
- provide legal protection for whistleblowers.

ARTICLE 19 welcomes the Joint Declaration, which sets out important standards in this area.