



## **International Conference on the Right to Public Information Feb. 27-29, 2008**

The Carter Center international conference on *The Right to Public Information* will reflect on the successes and lessons learned over the past decade in the access to public information (ATI) field and consider the emerging issues. Though there have been great advances, much in the world has changed and there remain a number of challenges including countries without laws, patchy implementation, and some continued resistance. In convening representatives from all the key stakeholder groups -- governments, donors, media, civil society, private sector, and academia -- the conference will critically examine the progress and begin to identify the necessary steps and measures to ensure the effective creation and implementation of universal access to public information. This conference will aim to address the fundamentally *political* aspects of access to information, such as motivations of private and public actors to contribute to or impede ATI cultures, and conclude with concrete ideas for future evolution of the right to information. Furthermore, we hope to reframe the rationale for ATI beyond the anti-corruption arena to also consider its effect on governance, socio-economic rights, and development.

The event will bring together approximately 100 people from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, China and India, Europe, and North America to explore the issues over a three day period. The action-oriented conference will allow space for sharing experiences, but with a primary focus on in-depth discussions of challenges, impact, and future agenda items. The first day of the conference will reflect on the community of practice's experience over the past 10 years and the state of the right to information. The luncheon keynote speaker will set the stage for the day; former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, along with current heads of state, will open the first plenary panel of the conference. The rest of the afternoon will include panels on the state of the right to information in the world, ATI as a tool for socio-economic rights and development, and as a tool for better governance.

The second day will be dedicated to group work, with the participants strategically placed into five groups to consider:

1. Politics and Economy: shifting the balance toward openness
2. Structure and Culture: creating an environment for transparency
3. Non-state and Multilateral Actors: examining roles and responsibilities
4. International Norm-Building: considering universal standards and a global community
5. Indicators and Measurement: demonstrating and improving impact

These multi-stakeholder working groups will explore the challenges to the passage and implementation of the law, constraints, and next generation issues. In the Carter Center's experience, these are topics that without our consideration could undermine past advances or retard future gains in the right to information. With strong facilitation in each working group before (through online discussion) and during the conference, the participants will emerge with a number of specific and prioritized recommendations and action items. Under President Carter's leadership, the concluding plenary will report back on the findings of the working groups and arrive at a set of prioritized recommendations/ideas for the future advancement of transparency and the right to information.

At the conclusion of the event, a summary of the conference with agreed upon findings and recommendations will be disseminated, a comprehensive conference report prepared, and periodic updates on implementation of the recommendations provided, as appropriate.