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National Security Principles Launched

A major, multi-year process of consultation culminates today with the launch of the Global Principles on National Security and the Right to Information (Tshwane Principles). The Principles, which involved 100s of individuals and the 22 key supporting organisations listed below, set out a careful balance between protecting genuine national security interests and respecting the internationally protected right to access information held by public authorities, or right to information.

"The Tshwane Principles build on earlier work, including the Siracusa Principles and the Johannesburg Principles," said CLD Executive Director, Toby Mendel. *"But they take this work forward by updating those documents and in terms of their level of detail and sophistication."*

The Principles reaffirm many established standards regarding the right to information, but they also break important new ground. While they avoid defining national security directly, Principle 9 provides a clear statement of the categories of information that may qualify as falling within the scope of national security. Importantly, Principle 10 lists a number of categories of information in relation to which there is a high or overriding presumption of openness.

Now that the process of developing the Tshwane Principles has come to an end, the far more difficult task of promoting their implementation at the national level will start. The Centre for Law and Democracy urges all stakeholders to contribute to this process, including by disseminating the Principles widely. For its part, CLD will now start to integrate the Principles into its research, capacity building and advocacy activities.

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The 22 supporting organisations and academic centres are:

- Africa Freedom of Information Centre (Kampala/ Africa)
- African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) (Cape Town/ Africa)
- Alianza Regional por la Libre Expresión e Información (Americas)
- Amnesty International (London/ global)
- Article 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression (London/ global)
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia) (Bangkok/Asia)
- Center for National Security Studies (Washington DC/ United States)
- Central European University (Budapest/ Europe)
- Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), Wits University (Johannesburg/ South Africa)
- Centre for European Constitutionalization and Security (CECS), University of Copenhagen (Copenhagen/ Europe)
- Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (Pretoria/ Africa)
- Centre for Law and Democracy (Halifax/ global)
- Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CDPI) (Islamabad/ Pakistan)
- Centre for Studies on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (CELE), Palermo University School of Law (Buenos Aires/ Argentina)
- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (New Delhi/ Commonwealth)
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (Cairo/ Egypt)
- Institute for Defence, Security and Peace Studies (Jakarta/ Indonesia)
- Institute for Security Studies (Pretoria/ Africa)
- International Commission of Jurists (Geneva/ global)
- National Security Archive (Washington DC/ global)
- Open Democracy Advice Centre (Cape Town/ southern Africa)
- Open Society Justice Initiative (New York, Budapest/ global)