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PRESS RELEASE

Liberia: ARTICLE 19 Welcomes Approval of Freedom of Information Act

ARTICLE 19 welcomes the approval of the Freedom of Information Act by the House of Representatives and Senate of the Republic of Liberia. It urges President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to immediately sign and implement the law.

The law includes many progressive features, including a pre-emption of existing secrecy laws and rules, the creation of an independent Information Commission, and a public interest test to limit exemptions. It was unanimously approved by the House of Representatives in July 2010 and by the Senate on 2 September 2010. It is now awaiting signature by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

“The adoption of the law represents an important step forward in fully achieving transparency in Liberia”, says Agnes Callamard, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19, “It is crucial that the government begins efforts immediately to implement the law by appointing the Information Commissioner, training public officials, and organising records to facilitate public access.”

Liberia is the first country in West Africa to adopt a right to information act and only the sixth in Africa. ARTICLE 19 has contributed to the development of law and policy reform related to freedom of information in Liberia since 2004.

Liberian Development Minister O Natty B Davis last month spoke at ARTICLE 19’s ‘Conference for Transparency, the Free Flow of Information and the Millennium Development Goals’ about the importance of access to information in achieving development and fighting poverty.

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.