



**PLAN OF ACTION TO ADVANCE THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO
PUBLIC INFORMATION IN THE AMERICAS RELEASED TODAY**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Atlanta . . . Participants in a conference on the right of access to information released today their findings and plan of action to advance the right in the Americas. The Americas Regional Plan of Action provides a blueprint for the regional and international community, states and non-state actors to establish, develop, and nurture the right of access to information in the Americas and calls on them to commit to the plan in furtherance of our common objective.

The regional document serves as an annex to last year's global Atlanta Declaration and Plan of Action and is available at www.cartercenter.org/accesstoinformation.html.

The conference was held April 28-30, 2009, in Lima, Peru, and was organized by The Carter Center in collaboration with the Organization of American States, the Andean Jurists Commission, and the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. More than 115 representatives from government, civil society, media, private sector, regional intergovernmental organizations, international and regional financial institutions, and donors from 18 countries in the region came together to consider the main obstacles and potential solutions to advance the right of access to information in the Americas.

Participants found that the greatest challenges to the right of access to information in the Americas are a lack of implementation and enforcement, backsliding in the more developed systems, and an absence of widespread use of the existing legislation and mechanisms, and that the diversity of the region necessitates diversity in responses.

The group also agreed that states have a special obligation to disclose information pertaining to human rights violations or corruption. This is all the more important in the Americas regional context of past state-sponsored or approved human rights violations and the more recent "global war on terror," whereby systematic torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment has been allowed to flourish under the veil of state secrets.

Chairing the final day of the conference, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter reminded those gathered that "access to information can change the landscape of society" as it provides citizens a tool to hold government accountable, improve development, and assure greater security, as well as being a fundamental human right. President Carter was in Peru as part of a trip to four Latin American countries also including Ecuador, Bolivia, and Brazil, where he met with the heads of state and urged them to establish and implement access to information legislation.

To read the full Americas Regional Findings and Plan of Action and the Atlanta Declaration for the Advancement of the Right of Access to Information, please go to www.cartercenter.org/accesstoinformation.html.

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A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 70 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; improving mental health care; and teaching farmers in developing nations to increase crop production. The Center has observed over 70 elections in nearly 30 countries. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide.