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## STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April 20, 2012

### **African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Grants Africa AFIC Observer Status**

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has during its 51<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session holding in Banjul, The Gambia granted Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) an Observer Status. The attainment of Observer status establishes close relations of co-operation with the African Commission in the promotion and advancement of human rights in Africa.

The right of access to information is protected under article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and in five other African Union treaties. The Charter also guarantees other rights such as life, natural resources, education, health, shelter, food all of which cannot be sufficiently protected without the realization of right to information.

Welcoming the news on this development, Mr. Gilbert Sendugwa AFIC's Head of Secretariat noted that this decision lifts advocacy for the right of access to information to another level. Through the Centre, AFIC's membership of twenty four organizations spread across the continent will have direct access to the African Commission. Members will through this platform keep the African Commission updated on progress state parties to the ACHPR are making with regard to the adoption and implementation of access to information laws, ratification and domestication of treaties that guarantee the right to information and other practical measures. Through this mechanism, Mr. Sendugwa added, "African citizens will share their experiences on state performance in making available information on issues that affect their lives such as the management of natural resources, education, health, agriculture and general decision making of national governments as protected by the Charter."

This decision of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights comes at a time when the need for transparent governance as tool for improving service delivery and attracting foreign investment in Africa has gained more relevance.

AFIC, its members and partners have been collaborating with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to develop an Access to Information Model Law for African Union member states which seeks to help countries develop laws that comply with international standards and the promotion of the Platform on Access to Information (APAI) Declaration that seeks to advance advocacy for the right of access to information.

With an Observer status AFIC will be able to work more effectively with the African Commission to realize the objectives of these initiatives.

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