PRESS STATEMENT: COALITION ON THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION, GHANA PETITIONS HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT JOHN MAHAMA

[RTI-COALITION GHANA](https://www.facebook.com/RTICoalitionGhana/)·[THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 2016](https://www.facebook.com/notes/rti-coalition-ghana/press-statement-coalition-on-the-right-to-information-ghana-petitions-his-excell/1231068690261457/)·6 MINUTES

The Coalition on the Right to Information, Ghana presented a petition today, August 18th 2016 to his Excellency, the President on the need for Ghana to pass the RTI Bill inclusive of the crucial amendments proposed by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs before Parliament lapses in 2017.

The petition which was received by the Chief of Staff on behalf of the President was presented following the failure of Parliament, despite several promises made by its Leadership, to pass the RTI Bill in its second session which ended on 5th August 2016.

The petition signed by the Steering Committee members of the Coalition called on His Excellency to intervene to facilitate the speedy passage of the Bill with the proposed amendments by Parliament. It also called on His Excellency to fulfil Ghana’s international commitments under the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) by engaging Parliament to pass the Bill as government committed to do under its OGP National Action Plan.

The Coalition in its petition noted that the unfulfilled promises by government at various international platforms that the RTI Bill will be passed by this administration is a dent on the image of the country, the President and the NDC government.

Below is the full petition.

**PETITION TO HIS EXCELLENCY, JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA,**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

**PLEASE INTERVENE AND EXPIDITE THE PASSAGE OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION BILL**

Your Excellency, we the under listed organisations and individuals would like to urge you to engage Parliament to resume and expedite the consideration of the RTI Bill currently at the consideration stage in Parliament. Your Excellency, upon assuming power in 2012, tabled the RTI Bill before the 6th Parliament on November 12th 2013 and subsequently the Bill was referred to the Select Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs for thorough discussion and review. The Select Committee, as part of its deliberative processes, held consultations with various stakeholders including the RTI Coalition and unanimously adopted a number of critical amendments to the Bill in its report presented to Parliament in December 2014. The objective of these proposed amendments by the bipartisan Committee is to make the Bill a robust, transparent and effective Bill which when passed into law would promote democratic participation, transparency and aide the fight against corruption.

In March 2016, Parliament began the consideration of the Bill with the proposed amendments by the Select Committee. Between March and June, 2016, Parliament was only able to consider 29 out of 157 clauses of amendments. However, Parliament suspended the consideration of the RTI Bill without any particular reason and began consideration of other bills some of which have today been passed. In all our engagements with Parliament, we were assured by both the majority and the minority members of Parliament that the RTI Bill will be passed in its second sitting for the year (May – July, 2016). Even at the 117th UN Human Rights Committee meeting, Members of Parliament led by the Deputy Attorney General, Hon Dominic Ayine assured the international community that the RTI Bill will be passed by July 22nd, and that Your Excellency has personally tasked him to attend Parliament regularly to ensure that the Bill is passed, but this promise has failed to materialise.

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF GHANA’S FAILURE TO PASS THE RTI BILL THIS YEAR:**

We would like His Excellency to note that the NDC government has a very unique opportunity to demonstrate to Ghanaians that the anti-corruption campaign is more than mere rhetoric. This is because this government has been in power for eight years and unlike any other party, the NDC party had made promises twice in both its 2008 and 2012 manifestoes to pass the RTI Bill into law. The delay in the passage of the Bill has huge implications for Ghanaians, Ghana as a country and Your Excellency, as the President of the Republic and the Co-Chair of Eminent Persons to Champion the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As you are aware, Goal 16:10 of the SDGs requires all countries to ensure public access to information for their citizens and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

The absence of the RTI law and the current delay in its passage means firstly, that Ghanaians would continue to struggle in their quest to effectively participate in governance and hold their leaders accountable; which may mean that public confidence in the government and state institutions may very soon be eroded.

Secondly, the non-fulfilled promise in various international platforms that the Bill will be passed by this administration is a dent on the image of the country and puts the credibility of government into question. Ghana signed unto the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Initiative in 2011 and made commitments in both the 2013/14 and 2016/17 National Action Plans to pass the RTI Bill. The failure by Ghana to pass the Bill four years on makes the country’s OGP participation questionable. Signing unto the OGP was an indication that government is committed to promote transparency, accountability, active citizen participation and the use of technology and innovation to strengthen governance. However, these objectives cannot be achieved without an effective access to information legislation. .

Thirdly, the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP) which is a strategy developed by government and other stakeholders to tackle corruption holistically and which envisions the involvement of all stakeholders in the fight against corruption cannot be implemented effectively without access to credible information. In the absence of the RTI law presently, Ghanaians, including our MPs, are limited in their ability to effectively scrutinise the nature of loan agreements and contracts that are signed in the name and on behalf of Ghana. The passage of the RTI law provides a good opportunity for Government to demonstrate its commitment to the fight against corruption.

Finally, an effective RTI law will set out the mechanisms by which citizens and indeed all persons can enjoy the constitutional right to access information. Many African countries, including Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burkina-Faso, Togo, South Sudan, have taken the bold step to empower their citizens by passing the Right to Information Law, but Ghana, the beacon of democracy, which is supposed to be setting the pace for other countries to follow, is yet to pass the law.

Your Excellency, we have heard you say on several occasions that when the RTI Bill gets to your table, you will sign it into law. However, we would like to urge you to go further to demonstrate your commitment by engaging Parliament to accelerate the passage of the RTI Bill before the 6th Parliament lapses in 2017. More specifically, we would like His Excellency to urge Parliament to review and endorse all the proposals by the Select Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and ensure that the amendments proposed by the Select Committee are carried on board.

**SIGNED: STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF THE RTI COALITION:**

**1. COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE (CHRI)**

**2. GHANA INTEGRITY INITIATIVE (GII)**

**3. GHANA ANTI- CORRUPTION COALITION (GACC)**

**4. GHANA JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION (GJA)**

**5. CENTRE FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CEPD)**

**6. GHANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS (GTUC)**

**7. CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT (CDD)**

**8. EANFOWORLD**

**9. MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR WEST AFRICA (MFWA)**

**10. PERFECTER OF SENTIMENTS (POS) FOUNDATION**

**11. PROF. KWAME KARIKARI (CO CHAIR) (INDIVIDUAL MEMBER)**

**12. MR. VITUS ADABOO AZEEM (CO CHAIR)(INDIVIDUAL MEMBER)**

**13. MR. SETH ABLOSO (INDIVIDUAL MEMBER)**

**14. MR. AKOTO AMAPAW (INDIVIDUAL MEMBER)**

**AUGUST 2016**