

Time for NATO to come out of the cold:

Access Info presents “Five Principles for an Open and Accountable NATO”

Madrid/Brussels, 4 April 2009 — Access Info Europe today called on NATO to adopt an information openness policy consistent with the access to information laws already in place in the Alliance’s 28 member countries.

As NATO commences its 60th anniversary Summit, Access Info criticised the Alliance for being the only major intergovernmental body not to have even a basic information disclosure policy.

NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer [wrote recently](#) about the lack of public understanding and knowledge about NATO and stressed the need to “*make the broader public aware of this new NATO.*”

“As the Strasbourg protests show, the public is well aware of NATO. The problem is not lack of awareness but the fact that NATO continues to be a closed and secretive organization distant from the general public,” said Helen Darbishire Executive Director of Access Info. *“It’s high time that NATO comes out of the cold and adopts an Information Openness Policy.”*

On 1 April 2009, civil society groups meeting at a [Shadow Summit in Brussels](#) called on NATO to “reconnect with citizens”, stating that to “*deepen and extend the shared values-base within the Alliance ... means an updated, more open, transparent and accountable Alliance, appropriate to 21st century expectation*”

The **Five Principles for an Open and Accountable NATO** presented by Access Info urge NATO to meet national and international access to information standards. This means a presumption that all information held by NATO is in principle public and that the only exceptions to publication should be those which are acceptable under comparative and international law.

The principles call on NATO to establish guidelines for proactive publication of core information and to create a mechanism by which the public can file requests for information. Access Info also called on the NATO to establish an independent review body for hearing appeals against refusals or failures to make information public within a short time-frame.

Access Info Europe argues that while it is clear that NATO holds a lot of sensitive information, other information such as that relating to procurement contracts should be made public just as it is by the ministries of defence of many NATO member countries.

“The Five Principles make clear that legitimately sensitive information could still be withheld,” said Helen Darbishire, Executive Director of Access Info, *“but on its 60th anniversary it is time for NATO to move into the 21st Century by opening up and being more accountable to its citizens.”*

For more information, please contact:

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