

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION 2021

Category: Commercial Law, Infrastructure and Telecommunications, Privacy Law, Infosec, and POPIA, Technology Law

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Today, 28 September 2021, the world commemorates International Day for Universal Access to Information. It was [declared](#) by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation on 17 November 2015 and [adopted](#) by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 September 2019. This day highlights the importance of access to information laws, and their implementation worldwide in order to promote democracy and human rights. The theme for this year is “The Right to Know - Building Back Better Access to Information”

The main objective of the commemoration of the Day is to accelerate the development of sustainable laws and policies that are aimed at making information accessible for all. This with the intention of cultivating informed citizens and societies to empower them to inter alia help shape laws and policies in ways that benefit society. The right to access information is recognised internationally , regionally and nationally.

Internationally article 19 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) recognises the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. In Africa, article 9 of the [African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights](#) recognises the right of every individual to receive information.

In South Africa, section 32 of the [Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996](#) recognises the right to access information. This is inclusive of any information that is held by the state and any information that is held by another person that is required for the exercise or protection of any right . The [Promotion of Access to Information Act](#) (“**PAIA**”) was enacted to give effect to the requirements set out in section 32 (2) which requires that national legislation must be enacted to give effect to the right to access information.

The [Protection of Personal Information Act](#) also gives recognition to the right to access information. Section 23 (1) (b) gives a data subject the right to request from a responsible party the record or description of the personal information about the data subject held by the responsible party provided that the data subject provides adequate proof of identity.

The commemoration of the International Day for Universal Access to Information 2021 finds the world still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. A period that has saw the need for access to information to enable people to make informed decisions. This day therefore serves as a rallying call to all governments of the world to respect their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and to accelerate efforts to ensure that citizens are able to exercise their rights to access information.