

# Ghana: Avoka calls for non-partisan debate on Information Bill

KUMASI: The Majority Leader in Parliament, Cletus Avoka, has urged civil society groups and other stakeholders to adopt a non-partisan approach to discussions on the Right to Information Bill which is currently before Parliament.



The passage of the bill, according to the Majority Leader, would benefit every Ghanaian, irrespective of one's political affiliation, as it would help promote good governance and Avoka recently made the call at public hearings organised in Kumasi by the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional, Legal, Parliamentary Affairs and Communication.

The public hearing forms part of a series of programmes being undertaken by the Joint Committee to solicit views from major stakeholders, and Ghanaians at large, on how to fine-tune provisions in the bill, before its eventual passage.

The forum brought together representatives from the academia, traditional authorities, metropolitan, municipal and district chief executives (MMDCEs), security services, and other civil society groups, including the media.

## Democratic right

The Majority Leader emphasised that no matter one's religious, tribal or political affiliation, every Ghanaian was entitled to participate actively in the democratic process of this country, hence the decision by the Committee to collate public views to enrich the bill.

He noted that Parliament, as an entity, was committed to ensuring the speedy passage of the bill, but stressed that there was the need for more consultations to be done, so that a comprehensive bill which captures every aspect of human life can be prepared.

Avoka therefore, expressed the optimism that the broad-based consultations would not only enhance the richness of the bill, but also ensure that the views of Ghanaians were adequately represented.

Asserting that democracy was not only about forming a political party and participating in elections, the Majority Leader emphasised the need for ordinary Ghanaians to have a stake in policy decisions and legislations that would affect their day to day activities.

The Ashanti Regional Minister, Dr. Kwaku Agyemang Mensah, in an address, noted that the choice of democracy made it imperative for the active participation of the people in the governance of the country, stressing that it was only when people were well informed, that they could contribute meaningfully to the governance process.

## **The right to information**

Stressing that the realisation of the importance of the right to information, and the desire to ensure that there was transparency in governance, Dr. Agyemang-Mensah noted that the freedom of information constituted the foundation of empowering the citizenry to contribute to good governance and the rapid development of the country.

"The mounting of these regional fora to consult stakeholders and other social partners demonstrates the commitment to ensuring that the bill actually reflects the views and aspirations of all Ghanaians," the Minister emphasised.

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