



Concept Note for the Celebration of the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) 2025 in Manila, Philippines

Theme: "Ensuring Access to Environmental Information in the Digital Age"

Organiser: UNESCO and the Republic of the Philippines

Date: 29-30 September 2025

Venue: Hotel Hilton, Manila

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Key Messages:

- Timely environmental information empowers all stakeholders to act on climate change.
- SDG 16.10.2 drives global access to information laws, policies and other regulatory mechanisms for transparency.
- Informed citizens are key to a greener, more equitable and thriving planet, including by holding policy-makers accountable for their commitments to internationally agreed frameworks.
- Everyone deserves access to environmental information.

1. Theme and Scope

The 2025 International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI), hosted by UNESCO and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, will take place in Manila on 29–30 September 2025. This landmark event marks the 10th anniversary of the designation of 28 September as the International Day for Universal Access to Information, reflecting a decade of progress and challenges in the right to information worldwide.

The theme for IDUAI 2025, “Ensuring Access to Environmental Information in the Digital Age”, focuses on the vital importance of timely, comprehensive, and cross-border access to environmental information in an increasingly digital world. The theme of this year’s IDUAI holds particular significance for Southeast Asia, a region acutely impacted by the effects of climate change. Environmental data, encompassing climate change, pollution, biodiversity, and disaster risks, transcends national borders, necessitating collaborative, transparent, and innovative global sharing of information. Access to information is particularly important for populations at risk of environmental disaster due to climate change. This theme also highlights how digital technologies and open data platforms can enhance public access, foster transparency, and empower citizens and stakeholders to participate meaningfully in environmental governance and sustainable development.

This conference is organized by UNESCO with the active participation and collaboration of key partners, including the International Conference on Information Commissioners



(ICIC), Open Government Partnership (OGP), and the Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIANet), which brings expertise in access to information, digital innovation, and advocacy.

2. Structure and Objectives of the Global Conference IDUAI 2025

As the custodian agency for SDG Indicator 16.10.2, which tracks the number of countries with laws guaranteeing public access to information, UNESCO plays a leading role in monitoring progress and advocating for the adoption and effective implementation of Access to Information (ATI) laws globally. This conference is a critical platform to support and encourage the remaining Member States without ATI laws to adopt such frameworks, ensuring that no one is left behind in the global pursuit of transparency and sustainable development, especially in access to environmental information.

The IDUAI 2025 Global Conference in Manila will bring together a diverse array of stakeholders—including government officials, UN agencies, civil society, environmental journalists, legal experts, and technology specialists—to engage in a dynamic exchange of knowledge, experiences, and strategies for strengthening access to environmental information worldwide.

The event's structure includes an opening ceremony, thematic panels, interactive workshops, and participatory discussions designed to foster collaboration and deepen understanding. The conference aims to highlight global and regional perspectives on the legal, technological, and social dimensions of access to environmental information. Participants will explore how international frameworks, such as the Aarhus Convention and the Escazú Agreement, provide models and tools for protecting the right to environmental information and public participation.

Discussions will cover a range of topics, including integrating big data and digital innovations into access to information laws, promoting transparency in climate governance, and addressing the unique challenges Small Island Developing States face in building climate resilience. The role of civil society and media in advocating for environmental transparency and combating misinformation will be emphasized, along with practical approaches to enhancing public awareness and engagement.

The conference will also address barriers to implementation, legal and ethical considerations, and the need for international cooperation to foster a robust, inclusive, sustainable and accessible information ecosystem.

Ultimately, through the IDUAI 2025 celebration, UNESCO and stakeholders seek to advance the enforcement of access to information laws, strengthen global partnerships, and promote a culture of transparency and accountability essential for achieving the SDGs and addressing the pressing environmental challenges of our time. The event will culminate in a statement of the participants of the conference reaffirming commitments to



universal access to environmental information and sustainable development goals in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The conference will advocate for the adoption of access to information legal frameworks since more than 50 Member States still lack dedicated access to information laws and/or policies, and time is running short to meet the SDG 16.10.2 target by 2030.

IDUAI 2025 is a key moment to catalyze new commitments, provide capacity support, and mobilize political will to close this gap and ensure universal access to environmental information for all.

3. Background

Universal access to information is foundational for transparent, participatory, and accountable governance. Since its proclamation by UNESCO in 2015, the International Day for Universal Access to Information has underscored access to information as a fundamental human right essential for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to [the UNESCO report](#), by the end of 2024, over 139 countries and territories will have adopted laws guaranteeing access to information, marking significant progress in promoting open societies. Yet, challenges remain in ensuring effective implementation, legal robustness, and public awareness, especially amidst rapid digital transformation and growing ecological threats.

Access to environmental information is particularly crucial in this context. It is deeply linked to international environmental governance frameworks such as the Paris Agreement (2015) and the [Rio Declaration on Environment and Development](#) (1992), in particular Principle 10, which emphasizes the public's right to information, participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters.¹ [The Paris Agreement](#) calls for transparency in climate action through open data sharing, while the Rio Declaration promotes environmental democracy as a pathway to sustainable development. These international instruments provide a legal and normative foundation supporting citizens' rights to know and enabling governments to uphold accountability in environmental policies.

Further reinforcing these commitments are recent UNESCO and global declarations that advance access to information, including the [Tashkent Declaration](#) (2022), which underscores the role of dedicated bodies tasked to implement access to information policies in the digital world impacted by the development of AI; the [Oxford Statement](#) (2023), which highlights the importance of digital inclusion and internet access; and the [Accra Statement](#) (2024), which stresses the importance of access to big data. Together,

¹ PRINCIPLE 10: Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.



these documents complement ongoing efforts to embed universal access to information into global governance frameworks.

Another important milestone is UNESCO's [Global Roadmap to Promote Information as a Public Good in the face of the Environmental Crisis](#) (2024). It outlines the shared responsibilities of governments, technology platforms, media, and civil society to uphold transparency, promote accurate information, and counter disinformation in the digital age. [The Global Initiative on Information Integrity and Climate Change](#) further builds on this momentum by addressing the intersection between environmental sustainability and the integrity of environmental information online. These frameworks are critical in ensuring reliable and actionable information in the face of climate crisis.

In addition, an important international standard-setting instrument in this regard was recently issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Its [Advisory Opinion](#) (2025) elaborates on the relationship between human rights and climate change. This landmark interpretation of the American Convention on Human Rights by the Court elevates access to environmental information as a core legal and democratic safeguard in the context of the climate crisis. It is essential for empowering communities, preventing irreversible harm, promoting climate justice, and fulfilling the obligations of Member States under international human rights law.

The digital revolution presents promising avenues for addressing these issues through innovative tools, big data analytics, and open government initiatives. At the same time, it raises new challenges concerning data privacy, misinformation, and digital divides that must be carefully navigated. This UNESCO Global Conference will present and discuss best practices, soft law, and guidelines developed by the Member States, UN agencies and other international organizations to improve legal frameworks and enhance access to reliable environmental information.