

Minutes of the Freedom Online Coalition's Strategy and Coordination Meeting

14:00 - 16:00 UTC - 23 November 2020, Virtual

Attendance: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States; FOC Support Unit [SU]

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Lea Kaspar [SU] welcomed Members to the Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM).
- Finland, upcoming FOC Chair for 2021, outlined the key priorities for their Chairship:
 - Promoting free Internet as a response to the challenge by authoritarian regimes through a political declaration/Communiqué at a Ministerial-level meeting in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021.
 - Reinvigorating diplomatic networks to raise the profile of the FOC within relevant forums, regional bodies, and in Silicon Valley with the private sector.
 - Focusing on open Internet as a way to advance sustainability, especially in the global South.
 - Strengthening networks, especially in the global South and within UN processes.
 - Disseminating the Joint Statement on Disinformation and strengthening actions on tackling misinformation, including highlighting the rights of women and vulnerable groups.
 - The 10th anniversary of the FOC, including increasing its visibility and organising the Freedom Online Conference (FO Conference) on 9-10 December 2021.
- Tour de Table - SU invited participants to introduce themselves.
- SU provided an overview of the agenda.

2. Housekeeping

- SU updated members on the status of action items since the last SCM:
 - Most action items have been completed with the exception of the following:
 - Friends of the Chair (FotC) 2021 Selection
 - The FOC is selecting Members to serve on the FotC for an annual term, 1 January - 31 December 2021. The call for expression of interest is open until Wednesday, 2 December.
 - Joint Statement on Spread of Disinformation Online
 - The final draft of the statement was circulated for a 5-day silence procedure ending on Tuesday, 24 November. *[SU note - the statement has since been finalised and [launched](#)]*
 - Draft Guidelines for Leading Diplomatic Networks
 - The guidelines are open for input until Monday, 14 December, to allow Members to consult with colleagues. The goal is to adopt the document before the start of Finland's Chairship in 2021.
 - SU provided an overview of upcoming meetings and events
 - Internal FOC meetings:
 - The Joint FOC/FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) Roundtable is on Tuesday, 24 November.
 - The Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (T-FAIR) will hold their next monthly call on Thursday, 3 December.
 - The next FOC-AN monthly call will be confirmed later this week.
 - The next FotC call will be confirmed later this week.
 - The first FotC call for 2021 is on Wednesday, 27 January.
 - External events:

- The virtual World Press Freedom Conference is on 9-10 December. Global Network Initiative and the FOC will hold a session on disinformation and human rights. More updates to be circulated soon.
- SU provided an update on finance.

Action>> Members to express interest in serving on FotC by emailing the SU by **COB Wednesday, 2 December**.

Action>> Members to provide written input on the Draft Guidelines for Leading Diplomatic Networks by **COB Monday, 14 December**.

3. SU provided a progress update on the Program of Action 2020:

- Shaping Global Norms
 - In 2020, the FOC issued five (*) joint statements:
 - [Digital Inclusion](#), led by Germany and Ghana, and launched in the opening ceremony of the Annual FO Conference on 6 February in Accra.
 - [Human Rights Impact of Cybersecurity Laws, Practices and Policies](#), led by Estonia and the Netherlands, developed by a multi-stakeholder task force on cybersecurity and human rights, and launched during the Annual FO Conference on 7 February in Accra.
 - [COVID-19 and Internet Freedom](#), led by the United States, Canada and Finland, and launched virtually on 8 June.
 - [AI and Human Rights](#), developed by the multistakeholder T-FAIR, led by Canada, and launched virtually on 5 November at IGF.
 - [Spread of Disinformation Online](#), led by Finland and UK, and launched on 24 November. (*SU note - the statement was launched after the SCM)
 - Members found T-FAIR's monthly learning calls valuable and congratulated Canada for their work.
 - Sweden noted that they have used language from all the joint statements and thanked Members involved in the drafting process.
- Diplomatic Coordination
 - FOC coordination in the second substantive session of the Open-ended working group (OEWG) in New York, February 2020:
 - Several FOC Member States, including Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK, referenced the Joint Statement on Human Rights Impact of Cybersecurity Laws, Practices and Policies in their remarks.
 - As a result of these interventions, following the second substantive session, several FOC Members provided comments into the OEWG's Chair's pre-draft of the OEWG report, and many, including the Czech Republic, Estonia, the Netherlands and Switzerland, referenced FOC's joint statement in their input.
 - FOC coordination in Geneva:
 - Germany delivered a [statement](#), which used agreed language from the Joint Statement on Digital Inclusion and was signed by over 20 Members, on behalf of FOC Members at the general debate of the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council, March 2020.
- Multi-stakeholder Engagement
 - In 2020, the FOC organised and participated in a number of multi-stakeholder events and discussions on various topics and concerns, including:
 - The 8th Annual FO Conference in Accra in February.
 - T-FAIR, established in April, held civil society consultations at RightsCon and online, to inform the development of the Joint Statement on AI and Human Rights. T-FAIR also held a panel discussion at IGF to launch the statement.

- Active involvement in New York and Geneva, and sharing leadership with Members who take on the initiative.
 - Seeking to establish a network in Silicon Valley to better engage with the private sector. Austria noted that the first informal meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 2 December, and the FOC representatives in the area will be invited today.
 - Expanding FOC's geographical span and representation by planning a series of events engaging the global South.
 - Organising a Ministerial-level meeting at UNGA and issuing a strong political statement on the vision and the mandate of the FOC.
 - Organising the FO conference in Finland in December 2021.
 - Austria proposed social scoring as a topic of interest for 2021.
- Visibility campaign
 - Increasing the visibility of the FOC has been included throughout the PoA by:
 - Proposing to draft a communications and media plan identifying key diplomatic events and dates.
 - Planning a social media video campaign of a series of short videos with representatives from FOC countries to raise awareness of the Coalition's activities. Finland will start planning these in December.
 - Revamp of FOC's website as part of broader communications strategy.
 - SU noted the possibility of commissioning external advice on the communications campaign.
 - Members thanked Finland for their leadership and efforts.
- Chairship 2022
 - Finland invited members to serve on the FotC and to indicate interest to lead the FOC in 2022.
 - Finland, the Netherlands, Germany and the US will reach out to possible candidates.
 - Finland noted the importance of geographical representation.
- SU developed an Internal Program of Action.

Action>> SU to circulate the Program of Action for silence procedure until **COB Tuesday, 8 December.**

5. AOB

- Canada proposed developing a consolidated position on language related to privacy when drafting statements or when engaging and negotiating beyond the FOC.
 - Canada noted that language on privacy was a red line for some members during recent statement negotiations and that this is a recurring issue. Developing stock language and a joint position would ease future negotiations. Canada proposed developing an internal document relating to privacy formulation.
 - The UK noted that the use of footnotes has been helpful during drafting of statements and that terminology could be anchored in international law.
 - Sweden noted that consensus documents in UNGA could also be helpful.
- Sweden noted that the Stockholm Internet Forum is scheduled for May 2021.
 - SU included the Forum in the PoA 2021.
- The SU will work with Finland to identify dates for the next SCM and let members know closer to the date.

Action>> SU to add stock language on privacy on FotC agenda for December and work with Canada to develop a timeline.

Action>> Canada to work on developing stock language on privacy and share with the FOC.