

Minutes of the Friends of the Chair Call #1

27 January 2021 at 2pm UTC

Attendance: Canada, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Netherlands, Switzerland, US; Support Unit [SU]

Housekeeping

- SU welcomed Finland, the FOC Chair for 2021 and the new group of Friends of the Chair (FotC).
- Recap of action items from the December monthly call:
 - Some of the action items have been completed. The following are outstanding:
 - Following liaison with Finland, SU to circulate a doodle poll to identify a suitable date for the next Strategy and Coordination Meeting.
 - SU to send the FOC Joint Statement on Spread of Disinformation Online on behalf of the FOC as official input to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression Irene Khan's report on disinformation.
 - San Francisco/Silicon Valley initiative leads to work on identifying the nature of the initiative and to present to the Friends of the Chair.
- SU has previously circulated the Internal Program of Action, outlining SU's activities and objectives for 2021, for objections from FotC. Provided there are no objections until COB Thursday, 28 January, the SU will adopt this document.
- FOC outlook and calendar
 - The SU introduced the Global Internet Freedom calendar -a starting document to be used by diplomatic network leads to help identify relevant events and processes in 2021. The calendar is to be updated by the SU throughout the year.
 - The next FotC call will take place on Wednesday, 24 February 2021.
 - The next FOC-Advisory Network (AN) call will be scheduled in February.
 - Finland, UK and SU are exploring different options to hold a virtual launch event on the Joint Statement on Spread of Disinformation in February.
 - RightsCon Online will be held on 7-11 June 2021. The FOC has submitted proposals for the following sessions:
 - FOC Open Forum on Freedom Online – trends and challenges in the 2020s, led by Finland;
 - Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (T-FAIR) session on AI and surveillance, led by Canada and UK;
 - Task Force on Digital Equality session, led by Germany, Ghana and AN Members.
 - The Freedom Online (FO) Conference has been confirmed for 2-3 December 2021. The Save the Date has been circulated and dates have been publicly announced.

Action>> SU to circulate a doodle poll to identify a suitable date for the next Strategy and Coordination Meeting.

Action>> SU to send the FOC Joint Statement on the Spread of Disinformation Online on behalf of the FOC as official input to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression Irene Khan's report on disinformation.

Program of Action 2021

- **10th Anniversary of the FOC**
 - High-level ministerial meeting

- Finland noted plans to organise an in-person meeting during UNGA in September with high-level representatives, but due to COVID-19 complications, a plan B entailing a virtual alternative is also being developed.
 - Political declaration
 - Finland pointed out the need to discuss the key issues and themes to be covered in the statement.
 - Finland to lead the drafting process.
- FO Conference
 - Finland noted the change in dates due to the IGF taking place at the same time.
 - Finland is exploring different options for holding the Conference given the COVID-19 situation, including a hybrid model with partial in-person events.

Action>> Finland to confirm dates for the high-level ministerial meeting in February.

Action>> Finland to share a detailed concept paper on themes and timeline of the political declaration ahead of the February FotC call.

- **Diplomatic Coordination**

- Local networks
 - The call for expressions of interest for leading diplomatic networks has been circulated with an open deadline.
 - Finland will lead on the New York and Geneva networks.
 - Canada has expressed interest in leading the Paris network at UNESCO.
 - Identified leads will be providing updates on the local networks on future FotC calls.
 - Finland proposed holding a virtual outreach event for the Geneva network based representatives in February to raise awareness of the FOC and its priorities, as well to facilitate discussions on topical issues.

- **Shaping Global Norms**

- Joint Statement on Disinformation
 - Finland, UK and SU are planning a launch event.
 - Potential speakers include global South representatives and Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression
- Task Force on AI and Human Rights
 - The first monthly call of the year will take place on Thursday, 28 January.
 - Canada has previously circulated a draft document with priorities for 2021 and asked group Members to indicate interest in leading on initiatives.
 - Upcoming learning calls:
 - February - Privacy and AI
 - March - Rome Call for AI Ethics
 - Invitations will be circulated closer to the events.
 - The Task Force will be looking to define next steps on the Joint Statement on AI and Human Rights' calls to action.
- Task Force on Digital Equality
 - First meeting of the Task Force took place on Monday, 18 January.
 - A session proposal has been submitted to RightsCon and a membership list is being consolidated by the SU.
 - Next steps include:

- Setting up a mailing list
- Drafting the Terms of Reference.
- Cybersecurity
 - US noted the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) mandates in New York are ending in the middle of March and end of May respectively. Thus, it is unlikely that new language can be introduced.
 - SU pointed out that even though the OEWG mandate is ending, a new OEWG has already been mandated to be set up according to the resolution passed last year.
 - The new mandate will last until 2025.
 - An organisational meeting is likely to take place around summer/early fall.
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 - Germany suggested focusing on the UN Secretary General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation and noted the new appointment of Technology Envoy head Fabrizio Hochschild.
 - Canada noted the importance of involving the FOC in the UN Secretary-General's Tech Envoy.
 - Canada proposed that the FOC sends a welcome letter to Fabrizio Hochschild on the position and highlighting areas in the Roadmap that the FOC could make a contribution to, such as AI and cybersecurity.
 - Canada noted the office will remain in New York.
 - Finland noted it will look into the process of sending a welcome letter to the new Envoy.
 - Finland called other Members, namely previous leads on cybersecurity issues, for thoughts on how to move forward.
 - US noted it would look into suggestions internally.
- Challenges by authoritarian regimes: n/a
- FOC Stock Language on Privacy
 - Canada noted that a draft text has been prepared which will be shared with the FotC for written comments.
 - Canada suggested going back to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) language when discussing privacy within the FOC and use a footnote to note that.

Action>> SU to set up a mailing list for the Task Force on Digital Equality.

Action>> Finland to look into process of contacting new UN Tech Envoy.

Action>> Canada to share draft text on FOC stock language on privacy to FotC for written comments.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**

- SU introduced updated the Africa Outreach project.
 - The project was initiated by Finland, who is coordinating with its missions in FOC African member states.
 - The project focuses on 3 main areas:
 - FOC visibility and operations, culminating in high-level meetings and an outreach event in the FOC African member states
 - Increasing FOC's capacity through learning calls and workshops

- Leveraging FOC's influence through diplomatic coordination and organising FOC sessions in relevant global events and processes
 - Finland and SU held an introductory call with Finnish missions in African member states.
 - SU provided an update on the San Francisco/Silicon Valley Initiative.
 - The group is developing a concept note to present to the FotC by next week.

Advisory Network (AN)

- AN held their monthly call on Monday, 25 January.
- AN is continuing work around identifying priority areas to inform the AN's and the FOC's work in 2021. A draft document will be shared with the FotC in February.
- AN proactive advice on UN resolution "Countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes" was submitted to FOC Members on Thursday, 17 December.
 - SU noted that the meeting to address the configuration of an organisational ad hoc committee and its leadership will take place in May 2021.
 - Finland suggested arranging a meeting to discuss potential for collaboration between Members on responding to and engaging with the AN's proactive advice.
 - US noted the importance of strengthening the relationship between FOC Members and the AN, but noted the need for identifying next steps.
 - US noted that the advice has been shared internally.

Action >> Finland and SU to coordinate on responding to the AN proactive advice and share with the FotC.

FOC Membership

- Updates on FOC Member engagement
 - Update on FOC Chairship 2022: n/a
- Updates on enlargement of FOC membership

AOB

- In the context of T-FAIR, Canada reached out to the OHCHR B-Tech Project team who suggested holding a presentation for the FOC, and potentially the AN.
 - Members expressed general interest in the initiative; Canada to liaise further and share information with Members.
- US raised the issue of maximising effectiveness of the FOC, as well as engaging Members within FOC mechanisms.
 - To take this forward, US and Canada proposed holding brainstorming sessions with all FOC Members interested in revisiting and reaffirming their commitments to the FOC, including discussing the FOC's impact in the general multilateral landscape.

Action >> US, Canada and Finland to discuss initiative to maximise effectiveness of the FOC and bring written propositions to the rest of the Coalition ahead of the next FotC call.