

Minutes of the Friends of the Chair Call #3 (April)

28 April 2021 at 14:00 UTC

Attendance: Finland (FOC Chair), Netherlands, Switzerland, US; Support Unit [SU]

Housekeeping

- Recap of action items from the Strategy and Coordination Meeting and Joint FOC/AN Roundtable
 - Canada to circulate the revised Stock Language on Privacy document.
 - SU has updated the Global Internet Freedom Calendar to include internal events.
 - Network leads are encouraged to lead on identifying relevant events and processes to include in the Global Internet Freedom Calendar.
 - The calendar will be shared monthly with the FOC;
- In accordance with the Internal PoA, the SU and Finland have developed a communications strategy.
 - SU is hiring a Communications and Engagement Assistant and Communications Consultant to support the delivery of the communications strategy.
- Outlook for the month ahead:
 - *Internal FOC events:*
 - April 29: The Task Force on Digital Equality Monthly Call.
 - May (TBC): T-FAIR Monthly Call.
 - May 26: The Silicon Valley Working Group Monthly Call.
 - May 26: Friends of the Chair Call
 - May (TBC): FOC-AN Monthly Call.
 - *External FOC events:*
 - April 29: World Press Freedom Day Conference: *Promoting Freedom Online: Tackling Online Disinformation.* [This session has already taken place.]
 - May 12: Stockholm Internet Forum: *Human Rights-Centred Internet Governance in the 2020s: Disinformation, Digital Inclusion and Artificial Intelligence.*
 - Africa Outreach events:
 - Tunisia, 17 May
 - Ghana, 18 May
 - Ethiopia, 20 May
 - Kenya, 27 May
 - RightsCon: *Unpacking the digital inclusion paradox: The Freedom Online Coalition's Task Force on Digital Equality*, TBC

Program of Action 2021

- **10th Anniversary of the FOC**
 - High-level ministerial meeting
 - Finland noted the preparations are moving forward internally.
 - Should the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) take place virtually, the meeting will take place on the margins of the FO Conference in Helsinki in December.
 - Political Declaration
 - Finland noted the Request for FOC-AN Advice on the initial framing of the Political Declaration on behalf of the FOC. The AN subsequently submitted their Advice.
 - Members discussed sharing a timeline on the development of the Political Declaration to inform on the process.

- US highlighted digital authoritarianism as a potential topic to be covered in the Political Declaration to garner attention and encourage higher-level representatives to attend the Ministerial-level meeting, and suggested a consultation timeline to be shared with members to encourage engagement.
 - 10th Anniversary Roundtable Consultations
 - An outcome report of the consultations will be shared with the Friends and the wider Coalition once finalised by Finland and the SU.
 - FO Conference
 - Finland noted the preparations are moving forward internally.

Action>> SU and Finland to share an outline of the consultation process to develop the Political Declaration with the FOC.

- **Diplomatic Coordination**

- Geneva
 - The network leads (Finland) are currently developing a work plan and setting up a mailing list.
 - Next steps include:
 - Contacting missions in Geneva, including experts in relevant fields, and circulating the work plan.
 - Coordinating ahead of the United Nations Human Rights Council 47th session.
- Paris (UNESCO)
 - The network leads (Canada and Finland) are currently developing a work plan and setting up a mailing list.
 - Next steps and potential activities include:
 - Contacting delegates, including experts in relevant fields, and circulating the work plan;
 - Hosting a briefing with the UNESCO Secretariat on the World Press Freedom Day Conference;
 - Hosting a meeting in May on the UNESCO Draft Recommendation on the Ethics of AI ahead of the June negotiations;
 - Looking into opportunities to promote the [Joint Statement on Spread of Disinformation](#).
 - The Netherlands inquired on FOC's scope of diplomatic coordination in non-UN processes in Paris, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and its work on encryption.
 - Finland noted it will discuss internally.
 - US noted possibility to engage around specific OECD meetings or topics that Members feel there is a need to engage to make diplomatic coordination manageable.
- New York
 - The network leads (US and Finland) are currently developing a work plan.
 - Next steps include:
 - Setting up a mailing list.
 - Organising a launch/title event on Internet shutdowns in June.
- Vienna [*lead not identified*]
 - US noted the discussions on cybercrime that might be taking place in Vienna in 2022.
 - Finland noted it will discuss this matter in bilateral meetings.

Action>> Netherlands to circulate more information about the OECD process for FOC's consideration.

Action>> Members to consider volunteering as leads for the Vienna diplomatic network.

- **Shaping Global Norms/ Advancing Priority Issues:**

- Finland provided an update on upcoming events on disinformation:
 - On April 29, the FOC hosted a virtual session at the World Press Freedom Day Conference *Promoting Freedom Online: Tackling Online Disinformation*.
 - The FOC will be hosting the virtual session *Human Rights-Centred Internet Governance in the 2020s: Disinformation, Digital Inclusion and Artificial Intelligence* at the Stockholm Internet Forum on Wednesday, 12 May.
 - This session will also cover the topics of digital inclusion and artificial intelligence.
- SU provided an update on the Task Force on AI and Human Rights (T-FAIR).
 - The group has held three calls in April:
 - Learning Call on AI and Privacy;
 - Call on Council of Europe's Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI) multi-stakeholder consultation;
 - Call on UNESCO to discuss its Recommendation on the Ethics of AI.
 - The Netherlands noted the T-FAIR calls on UNESCO and CAHAI calls were very useful and thanked for their organisation.
 - The next T-FAIR call will be held on 6 May.
- SU provided an update on the Task Force on Digital Equality.
 - The Task Force Terms of Reference were adopted.
 - The Task Force is meant to meet for their monthly call on 29 April.
- Stock language on privacy
 - The revised stock language on privacy will be shared with Members once the document is finalised.

Action>> Canada to share the revised stock language on privacy with FOC.

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach:**

- Africa Outreach
 - The project aims to increase the FOC's profile, visibility and operations in Africa, and bring FOC members, AN members and external stakeholders from regional and local organisations together to engage in joint activities, learn and enhance cooperation on key themes and policy priorities in the African context.
 - Preparations are underway for the following high-level events:
 - Tunisia, 17 May
 - Ghana, 18 May: The event is being planned in a hybrid format in partnership with the Embassy of Finland in Abuja (accredited to Ghana), the Government of Ghana, and the Embassy of Germany in Accra.
 - Ethiopia, 20 May
 - Kenya, 27 May
- Silicon Valley Working Group
 - The working group's concept note was adopted in March.
 - The group met earlier in April to discuss setting up a working plan, including on advocacy, engagement, and activities and goals.

Advisory Network (AN)

- Finland noted it has received an offer from the AN co-Chairs for Microsoft to brief the Coalition or the New York diplomatic network on the UN Cybercrime Treaty.
 - US noted it has an interest in hearing broadly from the AN on this topic, and welcomed for this event to be organised in a collaborative fashion by various AN members later in the year.
 - The Netherlands noted it would be interested in a broader briefing on the issue.
- SU provided an update on AN activities.
 - The AN held their monthly call on 27 April.
 - In the meeting, the group reiterated the proposed invite to the FOC Chair to join monthly meetings.
 - Finland noted it is considering joining the meetings starting from May, and encouraged Friends to provide input on anything they would like to convey to the AN.
 - Friends noted the possibility of other Members attending with the FOC Chair, or having liaisons for specific calls and topics.
 - Finland and the SU sent a Request for AN Advice on the initial framing of the Political Declaration on 13 April.
 - The AN submitted their advice on 23 April to Finland.

FOC Membership

- N/A

AOB

- US highlighted the need to revisit the FOC policy of not-issuing country-specific statements, and noted that similar coalitions like the Media Freedom Coalition do not have this rule.
 - SU noted one of the recommendations from the 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultation Outcome Report is to revisit this policy.
 - Finland noted it will consider next steps in addressing this matter.
 - The Netherlands highlighted that Canada could have a supporting role as the future Chair of the FOC and the current Chair of the Media Freedom Coalition.
- The Netherlands emphasised the opportunity to reassess the key issues underpinned by the FOC in events such as the the Summit of Democracies, and highlighted less obvious partners to engage with, such as rural universities and open academics.
- US noted the G7 will also be issuing a Statement on Internet Shutdowns, and the statement will be mentioning the FOC [Joint Statement on State-Sponsored Network Disruptions](#), while the portion of the statement on Cyber will reference the [Joint Statement on Human Rights Based Approach to Cybersecurity Policy Making](#).

Action>> Friends to consider next steps in addressing FOC policy of not issuing country-specific statements.