



# **The Freedom Online Coalition 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultations: Outcome Report**

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was produced in April 2021 by the Secretariat of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) as an outcome document from the Coalition's 10-year Anniversary roundtable Consultations. Its aim is to summarise the discussions held at the roundtables and outline the key takeaways to identify a way forward for the Coalition to ensure it remains an important vehicle for promoting Internet freedom.

## 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ROUNDTABLE CONSULTATIONS

Since its founding in 2011, the FOC has been a unique mechanism for coordination, breaking down traditional geo-political silos and focusing on relevant policy issues in the digital context. In order to strengthen the Coalition and maximise its effectiveness as a multilateral human rights organisation working to advance Internet freedom, Finland, FOC Chair 2021, supported by the United States and Canada, initiated the facilitation of the 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultations. The conversations intended to provide a platform for an open discussion among FOC Members, and an opportunity for stocktaking and analysis of the FOC as the Coalition marks its 10-year anniversary.

The consultations took place in March 2021 through three roundtable virtual meetings:

1. Roundtable Consultation #1: *10 Years of Freedom Online - Taking Stock*
2. Roundtable Consultation #2: *Unlocking Gaps and Challenges*
3. Roundtable Consultation #3: *FOC in 2020s - Way Forward*

Ahead of the Roundtable Consultations, the FOC Secretariat prepared a report<sup>1</sup> to inform the consultations and provide an institutional stock-take of the Coalition's guiding principles, history, organisational structures, and activities. In addition, an online survey was circulated to FOC Members, and included the following questions:

1. What is the key benefit of engaging with the FOC for your Government?
2. What are the key challenges that prevent your Government from further engaging with the FOC?
3. What can be done to address the challenges mentioned above?
4. Where would you like to see greater FOC engagement going forward?

The survey was filled out by sixteen FOC Members, and its results informed the discussions that took place during the Roundtable Consultations (see [Annex II](#) for the full survey results).

Following the discussions with FOC Members, the FOC sought to consult with the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) during the Joint FOC and FOC-AN Roundtable, which provides a means for multistakeholder collaboration within FOC processes, and an opportunity for dialogue and sharing best-practices between the FOC and the FOC-AN.

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<sup>1</sup>[The Freedom Online Coalition 10 Years On: A Stocktaking Report](#)

## TAKING STOCK: EVOLUTION AND VALUE OF THE FOC

The 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultations provided an opportunity for Members to take stock of the FOC's evolution in its first decade of working to promote an open, secure and free Internet worldwide, and consider the value of the Coalition to their respective governments.

In the 10-year anniversary survey and the discussions taking place during the first Roundtable Consultation, Members indicated being part of an essential global network where like-minded states can share knowledge, information, and best practices as one of the main benefits of engaging with the FOC. Members emphasised the opportunity FOC provides states to cooperate on policy issues as equally important when it comes to their governments' engagement in the Coalition. This includes shaping global norms by developing important language relating to online freedoms, furthering countries' own understanding of issues, and establishing national foreign and security policy priorities and rules-based international order. To that end, the FOC has developed more than twenty joint statements<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, Members highlighted the capacity to reference the developed FOC language in bilateral engagements, public statements, and multilateral fora, including through the Coalition's diplomatic networks in Paris, Geneva, Vienna and New York as important factors that dictate their level of engagement with the Coalition. Since 2011, FOC coordination efforts took place in a number of fora, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Stockholm Internet Forum, RightsCon, etc.

Members also noted the multistakeholder nature of the Coalition as a crucial benefit of their engagement with the FOC. The FOC sub-entities, such as the Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, the Task Force on Digital Equality, and the Silicon Valley Working Group, as well as the Freedom Online Conference, were all underlined by Members to be beneficial mechanisms for furthering mutual values of promoting Internet freedom and safeguarding human rights online.

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The Freedom Online Coalition 10 Years On: A Stocktaking Report\*](#)

## **GAPS AND CHALLENGES**

Through the 10-year anniversary survey, FOC Members identified a number of challenges that prevent their respective Governments from engaging with the FOC more proactively. These were discussed among Members during the second Roundtable Consultation, *Unlocking Gaps and Challenges*, and at the Joint FOC and FOC-AN Roundtable.

### **Strategy and Impact**

In accordance with the 10-year anniversary survey, there is a need to ensure long-term continuity of FOC activities, including diplomatic coordination and shaping global norms, in order to remain a strategic and impactful vehicle for protecting Internet freedom and human rights online. During the Roundtable Consultations, Members highlighted the lack of strategy regarding the FOC's transition from language development and norm-setting to implementation and direct advocacy in relevant international and regional fora and processes. To that end, the current FOC policy of not issuing statements related to country-specific human rights situations was emphasised as potential impediment to achieve greater impact and efficacy.

Members identified the geographical diversity of the FOC membership as one of its most valuable assets. In this regard, Members noted that the lack of engagement within the Coalition, particularly of its global South Members, prevents the Coalition from being more relevant in the field of human rights online and efficiently impacting policy-making, especially in regional processes.

### **Visibility**

Closely related to the FOC's strategy and impact is its internal and external visibility. The FOC is the only multilateral body which advocates for the protection of human rights online, yet Members emphasised that there are often misconceptions about the Coalition and its work. The FOC's perceived lack of visibility (both within and outside of the Coalition) is seen to prevent governments from further engaging with the FOC, thereby affecting its overall impact.

### **Internal Capacity**

Consequential to the FOC's lack of visibility and strategic vision, a number of Members voiced concerns over the lack of internal capacity being an obstacle in coordinating and engaging with all aspects of the FOC. While some Members voiced the need to take national interest into account, others noted that language can at times be a barrier to further engagement.

### **Administrative Burden**

Members indicated there have also been administrative challenges that have kept them from further engaging with the Coalition, including the inability to attend meetings due to time zone constraints. Members also pointed out that discussions and actions expected by Members could be made clearer and more concise in communications by the Support Unit.

## WAY FORWARD

On the back of the challenges identified above and taking into account FOC's value add to its Members and the broader community, the 10-year Anniversary Consultations provided a platform for Members to reflect on possible ways forward for the Coalition. Members discussed potential solutions to identified challenges to ensure the FOC remains an important avenue for dialogue on key pressing Internet freedom and human rights online-related issues.

**Focus on FOC diplomatic coordination.** In order to enhance the Coalition's impact going forward, Members noted the need for greater focus on FOC diplomatic coordination – both at capital level and through FOC diplomatic networks. This applies particularly to engagement in international processes and multilateral fora where the diverse membership of the FOC can be leveraged (e.g. United Nations Human Rights Council, United Nations General Assembly, International Telecommunications Union, United Nations First Committee Open-Ended Working Group, Council of Europe). Members highlighted that the value add of the FOC message in these processes lies in reaffirming international laws, and emphasised the need to prioritise involvement and to assess where the FOC could play a larger role in negotiations and influencing policy.

To support capital level coordination, a number of suggestions were discussed:

- Designating specific FOC Members to input into relevant ongoing processes within their regions on behalf of the Coalition. To that end, it was suggested that more engaged Members could support global South and other Members representing specific regional contexts in participating in regional events and conferences on behalf of the FOC, by providing the necessary resources. By doing this, Members will showcase global South and specific regions' engagement, as well as help less active Members increase FOC visibility within their governments and promote meaningful engagement by global South Members.
- Forming voluntary sub-groups within the FOC related to specific issues identified in the Program of Action to act as platforms for information sharing within the Coalition.
- Revisiting FOC's internal policy on not issuing country-specific situations.

In the case of FOC diplomatic networks, the following suggestions were indicated:

- Holding meetings ahead of relevant sessions.
- Developing a plan of action and annual priorities for each FOC diplomatic network.
- Improving digital literacy among Members' missions before providing input into relevant processes, especially on issue areas where the FOC does not have the language to engage.

**Leverage stakeholder engagement.** Pertinent to these conversations, Members discussed how to leverage and promote the FOC-AN's meaningful participation in the work of FOC diplomatic networks. FOC-AN Members suggested the possibility of inviting the FOC Chair to the AN monthly meetings to promote collaboration and dialogue between the FOC and the FOC-AN. Members suggested utilising a mutual virtual repository to exchange knowledge and relevant information.

**Consider the relevance of FOC's vision in the broader geopolitical context.** In relation to FOC's impact and strategy, FOC-AN Members also noted there is a need to address the principal differentiation between democracies and authoritarian regimes that aim to use regulation of technologies to threaten Internet freedoms. Digital authoritarianism is becoming a competing model for online governance, and FOC-AN Members highlighted the FOC's 10th Anniversary as an opportunity to address this issue and present a proactive strategy on how to regulate the Internet and new technologies with a human-rights based approach.

**Increase the visibility of the FOC.** Along with issuing country-specific reactions, which a number of Members see as one of the potential solutions to the Coalition's lack of visibility, Members also proposed increasing membership, coordinating with similar mechanisms (e.g. Media Freedom Coalition), and developing a comprehensive communications strategy which will establish the FOC as a relevant actor in priority processes in the broader community. FOC Members also highlighted the option of developing speaking points on priority issues to use on social media as a beneficial way to achieve this.

**Consider ways to incentivise less active Members.** When discussing the challenge of internal capacity which prevents certain countries from engaging with the FOC, Members proposed considering creating incentives, including resources to designated Members who have constraints. Members also suggested agreeing on bilateral talking points to raise the FOC as an important platform for relevant issue areas to get higher-level government attention, and influence capacity.

**Consider ways to ease the administrative burden.** In order to address the administrative challenges that have arisen for a number of Members, suggestions included improving the format of the minutes to make it easier for Members to digest information, considering scheduling meetings for different time zones and running certain sessions twice, and providing more opportunities for the Members to provide written feedback.

## ANNEX I - Minutes of the Roundtable Consultations

### Minutes of the FOC 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultation #1: 10 Years of Freedom Online - Taking Stock

Wednesday, 10 March

14:00 - 15:15 UTC

Attending: Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Latvia, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (UK), United States (US); Support Unit [SU]

#### 1. Opening remarks

- Finland, FOC Chair 2021, welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.
  - Finland thanked Canada and the US for initiating the roundtable discussions.
  - Finland provided a brief summary of the Coalition's activities and noted that the 10-year anniversary of the Coalition provides an opportunity to take stock and identify next steps for the FOC in the 2020s.
  - Finland noted that:
    - To maximise joint statements' political potential, more needs to be done to advance advocacy and coordination in international fora and in regional organisations;
    - Activities to create continuity to FOC processes have already started through revitalising the diplomatic networks.
  - Finland encouraged Members to reflect on how to strengthen FOC's visibility and effectiveness to increase engagement from FOC governments
- The US provided opening remarks:
  - The US thanked Finland for their efforts and leadership and noted the need to work together and identify where the FOC is most useful and effective to address the challenges of the next decade.
- Canada provided opening remarks highlighting:
  - The roundtable consultations as an opportunity to have open discussions about FOC effectiveness in the next decade, including how to respond to the rising threats of digital authoritarianism and opportunities to engage on non-FOC initiatives;
  - The need to explore new innovative working methods to share knowledge;
  - Canada has put forward a bid for FOC Chairship 2022.

#### 2. Discussion

- Finland highlighted the importance of dialogue among all relevant actors, including non-FOC Members who are ready to cooperate on policy priorities.
- Canada noted that the FOC needs to consider how to balance the negative externalities created by the current governance model of the Internet internally, as well as the threat of digital authoritarianism externally.
  - The FOC needs to adapt and work together to reshape Internet governance.
  - The ministerial-level meeting at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) provides an opportunity to do this.
- The US, Ghana, the Netherlands, the UK and Germany emphasised the need to transition from norm-setting to action and implementation in the next decade.
  - Germany and the Czech Republic highlighted the importance of the work of the FOC Task Forces and Working Groups.
  - The Netherlands pointed out the need to discuss how to translate FOC language into official UN language.
  - Canada noted that the Joint Statement on AI is currently being translated into four languages to make it more accessible and to bring the language outside the FOC.

- Germany and Finland highlighted the importance of monitoring and developing language on topical and current developments.
- Germany, Ghana and Sweden noted the need to deepen the FOC membership and ensure more active engagement from all Members, including in the global South.
- Members noted interest in the following areas:
  - France - around disinformation and media freedom online;
  - Latvia - around the Silicon Valley Working Group and disinformation issues;
  - Ireland - around disinformation;
  - The Czech Republic - around cybersecurity, disinformation, AI, new technologies and their impact on human rights online.
- Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Ghana, Mexico and the Czech Republic noted the importance of information sharing and coordinating in other multilateral fora and processes, such as the Human Rights Council (HRC), UNGA, the UN Secretary General’s Roadmap on Digital Cooperation, the Council of Europe, OECD, UNESCO the African Union and the Organization of American States.
  - Ireland highlighted an opportunity for the FOC to be engaged in the UN resolution on civil society space at the June Session of the HRC.
  - Canada noted the Task Force on AI and Human Rights (T-FAIR)’s Roundtable with the UN High-Level Panel (UNHLP) on Digital Cooperation.
- Sweden and Ireland highlighted the importance of the multistakeholder approach and the FOC Advisory Network’s work.

### **3. Closing remarks**

- Finland provided closing remarks and identified three main areas for discussion:
  - Sharing knowledge and information better
    - Looking at next steps after development of joint language
  - Moving faster and be more flexible in reacting to recent developments
    - Developing country-specific statements
  - Cooperating with other organisations and political processes
    - Learning from the Media Freedom Coalition and the Community of Democracies
- Finland welcomed Members to submit background materials and fill out the survey to inform the next roundtable discussions.



# Minutes of the FOC 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultation #2: Unlocking Gaps and Challenges

Thursday, 18 March

16:00 - 17:15 UTC

Attending: Australia, Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (UK), United States (US); Support Unit [SU]

## 1. Opening remarks

- Finland, FOC Chair 2021, welcomed Members and opened the meeting.
  - The purpose of the roundtable consultations is to provide an opportunity for Members to take stock and identify a way forward, including preparing the Coalition for drafting the Political Declaration to be presented at the Ministerial-level meeting in the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September.
  - This roundtable consultation will focus on FOC Member engagement and ongoing challenges.
- The following questions, formulated on the basis of the first roundtable consultation and the survey results, will be guiding this discussion:
  - Main guiding question:  
What would make the FOC more impactful and strategic in its work?  
How can the FOC be more effective in responding to topical human rights violations and developments? How to strengthen cooperation with key stakeholders? How to increase our information and knowledge sharing on urgent or evolving thematic issues and trends?
  - Other questions to consider:
    - What can the FOC do to address internal capacity problems among its Members?
    - How can the FOC improve its visibility and outreach?
    - How can the Support Unit provide a better foundation for the FOC to tackle the identified challenges?
    - Do you think the FOC should tackle some other challenges in order to remain a relevant actor in protecting human rights online in the 2020s?

## 2. Discussion

- Austria, US, Sweden, Latvia, and the UK noted that the lack of visibility of the Coalition and its work prevents governments' further engagement with the FOC, thereby affecting its impact.
  - Austria highlighted that partners in Silicon Valley had misconceptions about the FOC.
  - Austria noted that one of the main strategic questions for Members to consider is if the Coalition merely advocates, or is also interested in receiving input from relevant stakeholders (e.g. in regional contexts, private sector).
  - Members noted the following to increase FOC's visibility:
    - Developing a comprehensive communications strategy, highlighting social media as a key tool;
    - Using the Ministerial-level meeting during UNGA;
    - Engagement with the Advisory Network.
  - US proposed to raise FOC visibility in bilateral dialogues with Members' respective governments.
  - US suggested that engaged Members support global South and other Members representing specific regional contexts in participating in regional events and conferences on behalf of the FOC by providing the necessary resources.
    - This would also be beneficial for Members to showcase global South and specific regions' engagement, as well as help inactive Members increase FOC visibility within their governments.
    - Sweden, Costa Rica, Austria, and Ghana agreed with the US proposition.

- Austria, Sweden, Latvia, and Costa Rica emphasised the lack of internal coordination and capacity as obstacles in coordinating and engaging with all aspects of the FOC.
  - Latvia noted the need to take national interest into account.
  - Costa Rica noted that language can be a barrier to further engagement.
  - Canada emphasised the importance of internal coordination within Ministries and raising the profile of the FOC, pointing out that Members could engage via various initiatives, such as T-FAIR, and the Task Force on Digital Equality.
- Sweden, Latvia, Australia, and Denmark highlighted the need to leverage the FOC’s work within UN processes, such as the Human Rights Council, more strategically to increase the Coalition’s impact and visibility in human rights online-related issues.
  - Denmark pointed to its recently launched [Strategy for Denmark’s Tech Diplomacy 2021-2023](#) which mentions the FOC and its work.
- Canada highlighted the need to prioritise Member engagement.
  - Canada noted the importance of proactively engaging civil society, not just in developing statements but also in diplomatic coordination and leveraging language, while giving them a sense of empowerment in FOC processes.
  - US recognised FOC Members’ lack of engagement as a significant challenge determining the degree of higher-level government involvement.
    - US, Australia and Sweden highlighted diversity of membership as one of the Coalition’s valuable assets.
- US highlighted that FOC’s internal policy of not issuing statements on country-specific situations decreases the Coalition’s efficacy.
  - Australia noted that the FOC network provides a platform to promote non-FOC statements, such as the [Joint Statement on the Internet Shutdown in Belarus](#).
- Sweden and Costa Rica addressed administrative challenges, pointing out that discussions and actions expected by Members could be more clear and concise in communications by the SU.

### **3. Closing remarks**

- Finland closed the meeting and thanked Members for their participation in the discussion.
  - Finland welcomed Members to fill out the 10-year Anniversary survey, as well as submit any background materials.

# Minutes of the FOC 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultation #3: FOC in 2020s - Way Forward

Wednesday, 31 March

15:20 - 16:30 UTC

Attending: Finland (FOC Chair), Australia, Austria, Canada, Estonia, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (UK), United States (US); Support Unit [SU]

## 1. Opening remarks

- Finland, FOC Chair 2021, welcomed Members and opened the meeting.
  - The purpose of the roundtable consultations is to provide an opportunity for Members to take stock and identify a way forward, including preparing the Coalition for drafting the Political Declaration to be presented at the Ministerial-level meeting in the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September.
  - This roundtable consultation will focus on identifying the way forward for the FOC.
  - During the discussion, the participating Members were divided into three groups, with each group focusing on one of the following guiding questions:
    - **Group 1:** How to strengthen cooperation with other mechanisms, including relevant regional actors and organisations? What are the key processes and organisations that the FOC should engage with?
    - **Group 2:** What different options could the FOC consider to monitor and respond to topical human rights situations around the world? Which options would increase the FOC's profile but also be acceptable to all Members?
    - **Group 3:** How can the Advisory Network be best leveraged to increase FOC impact?
  - Members also addressed additional questions based on the discussions that took place during Roundtable #2:
    - How to strengthen the Coalition's regional outreach activities?
    - How to better support member states with limited internal capacity to engage with the FOC?

## 2. Discussion

- A. **Group 1:** How to strengthen cooperation with other mechanisms, including relevant regional actors and organisations? What are the key processes and organisations that the FOC should engage with? (*Moderator and rapporteur: Canada*)
  - Canada, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland participated in this group discussion.
  - While the FOC is reactivating its diplomatic networks, Members noted the need to assess where FOC could play a larger role and which processes to prioritise. Suggestions included:
    - Specific FOC Members to be designated to input into relevant ongoing processes within their regions on behalf of the Coalition.
    - The value add of the FOC message in relevant processes lies in reaffirming international law in online forums and negotiations.
      - The Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (T-FAIR) is an example of how this can be achieved.
    - Focus on regional instruments that reflect FOC values, and where there is danger of these values being undermined (e.g. OEWG, ITU in regards to its Global Cybersecurity Agenda).
    - Participate in processes where the diverse membership of the FOC can be leveraged, and where global South members can meaningfully engage.
    - Holding coordination meetings ahead of relevant sessions, as well as developing a plan of action and annual priorities for each FOC diplomatic network, is useful to implement future FOC input into regional and international processes.
    - The need for more preparatory work to provide relevant input at some processes (e.g. OEWG) where the FOC does not have the language to engage.

- In plenary, US noted the importance of improving digital literacy among Members' missions before considering influencing language in important issue areas.

**B. Group 2:** What different options could the FOC consider to monitor and respond to topical human rights situations around the world? Which options would increase the FOC's profile but also be acceptable to all Members? (*Moderator and rapporteur: US*)

- Australia, Austria, Finland, Switzerland, and the US participated in this group discussion.
- The group discussed the possibility of forming voluntary sub-groups within the FOC related to specific issues identified in the 2021 Program of Action to act as platforms for information sharing among Members.
- US noted that the Coalition needs to revisit its policy of not issuing specific country-specific situations.
- In relation to increasing the visibility and utility of the FOC, other ways of achieving this could be:
  - Increasing membership across the world;
  - Coordinating with similar mechanisms, such as the Media Freedom Coalition;
  - Engaging on social media.

**C. Group 3:** How can the Advisory Network (AN) be best leveraged to increase FOC impact? (*Moderator and rapporteur: Finland*)

- Austria, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, and UK participated in this group discussion.
- They discussed how to leverage and promote the AN's meaningful participation in the development of future joint statements, and suggested a virtual platform for engaging in these conversations.
  - The group addressed the AN having a more direct contact with diplomatic networks when discussing relevant ongoing processes, such as the OEWG.
  - The group also discussed the possibility of inviting the AN co-Chairs to FOC meetings to encourage open conversations.

**D. Plenary**

- On strengthening the Coalition's regional outreach activities, the SU identified having liaisons as one of the solutions indicated by Members in the 10-year Anniversary survey.
- On supporting member states with limited internal capacity to engage with the FOC, the US proposed the following:
  - Members who have the capacity could support and provide resources to designated Members who have constraints.
  - Members could agree on bilateral talking points to raise the FOC as an important platform for relevant issue areas to get higher-level government attention.
- Finland noted it is developing a communication strategy in coordination with the SU, and highlighted the use of social media in establishing the FOC as a relevant actor in priority processes in the broader community.
  - Finland suggested that Members agree on speaking points on priority issues to use on social media.
- Sweden noted the Stockholm Internet Forum (SIF) is taking place on 10-12 May.
  - Finland and the SU intend to host an FOC event at SIF.

**3. Closing remarks**

- Finland closed the meeting and thanked Members for their participation in the 10-year Roundtable Consultations.
  - Finland noted the SU will be putting together an outcome document on the discussion that took place during the roundtables.

## ANNEX II - 10-year Anniversary Survey Results

### **Question 1:**

What is the key benefit of engaging with the FOC for your Government?

#### **Responses:**

- Coordination and cooperation with other Member States on both FOC and non-FOC related files;
- Being a part of and building an essential network with a group of like-minded states across the globe ;
- Contribution to language development and policy discussions as well as opportunities to impact policy-making;
- Referencing developed language in bilateral engagements and public statements, as well as in multilateral fora and through diplomatic networks;
- Furthering countries' foreign and security policy priorities and rules-based international order;
- Furthering countries' own understanding of issues;
- Engagement with the multistakeholder AN;
- Knowledge/ Information transfer and sharing best practices, including via:
  - Learning Calls
  - Working Groups and other entities.
  
- Priority areas mentioned:
  - Internet freedom
  - Rules-based international order
  - Emerging technologies
  - Artificial Intelligence
  - Internet censorship
  - Network disruptions
  - Cross-border attacks on freedom of expression online
  - The trend of closing civic space
  - Digital inclusion
  - Human rights impact of cybersecurity laws
  - COVID-19
  - Media freedom online
  - Internet governance

### **Question 2:**

What are the key challenges that prevent your Government from further engaging with the FOC?

#### **Responses:**

- Internal capacity
  - Lack of internal capacity and resources
  - Insufficient capital level coordination domestically
- Impact and strategic vision
  - Need to ensure long-term continuity of FOC activities
  - Incapability of FOC to react to country-specific human rights situations hindering FOC's effectiveness
  - Lack of engagement of the global South
- Visibility
- Administrative challenges
  - Time zones

### **Question 3:**

What can be done to address the challenges mentioned above?

#### **Responses:**

- Internal capacity
  - Encourage Members to lead on various engagements, e.g. diplomatic networks
  - Share lessons learned from Members on internal coordination on FOC topics within MFAs
  - Consider secondments (JPOs) from Members to the SU to strengthen the SU and support the engagement of Members
- Impact and strategic vision
  - Increase engagement of FOC members, including global South members
  - React to country-specific situations
    - Monitor and highlight the most egregious violations around the world
    - Consider options for FOC responses
  - Audit - Initiate a review of all FOC Members under the Terms of Reference
  - Conduct outreach activities to reach non-FOC audiences, including in the global South
  - Strengthen cooperation with other mechanisms, including relevant regional actors and organisations
- Visibility
  - Engaged FOC governments can raise the FOC and its priorities during bilateral meetings with foreign ministries of non-engaged FOC governments
  - Conduct outreach activities, including sessions in regional conferences
  - Encourage the AN to advocate for the FOC within their networks
- Administrative challenges
  - Minutes - improve the format of the minutes to make it easier to digest information
  - Further consideration of scheduling meetings for different time zones/ Run sessions twice
  - Opportunities to provide written feedback

**Question 4:**

Where would you like to see greater FOC engagement going forward?

**Responses:**

- Diplomatic coordination, including in international processes and multilateral fora (e.g. the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC), United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the UN First Committee Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), Council of Europe)
- Cooperation with other relevant mechanisms (Media Freedom Coalition)
- Engagement with the private sector
- Engagement with global South stakeholders, specifically on:
  - Digital inclusion and Internet shutdowns
  - Ensuring global South is actively present in discussions to tailor solutions
- Raising the profile of the FOC
- Further engagement on specific relevant issues, including:
  - Emerging technologies
  - Disinformation
  - Digital authoritarianism
  - Civic space and digital resilience
  - Rights of women, girls and vulnerable groups
  - Rules-based international order