

# FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting

Monday, 29 November 2021

12:00 - 13:30 UTC



## Attending:

Finland, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, US; Support Unit [SU]

## Welcome & opening remarks

- SU welcomed Members to the third Strategy and Coordination (SCM) meeting in 2021.
- Finland, FOC Chair 2021, welcomed FOC Members that joined recently (Denmark, Italy and Luxembourg), and shared highlights of 2021:
  - FOC 10-year Anniversary Roundtable Consultations
  - Development of a comprehensive communication strategy
  - Outreach events in Africa to strengthen FOC links in the region
  - FOC [Joint Statement on Freedom of Expression Online](#) presented at the 47th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC)
  - “Freedom Online Coalition 10th Anniversary Helsinki Declaration – Towards a Rules-Based, Democratic and Digitally Inclusive World”, to be delivered at the FOC Ministerial Meeting
  - The 10th Anniversary of the [Freedom Online Conference](#)

## Housekeeping

- SU provided an update on Friends of the Chair 2022 and FOC sub-entities mandate extensions.
  - The following Members will serve on the Friends of the Chair in 2022: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, US. *[NB - In the meeting, France also expressed interest to serve on the Friends.]*
  - All active FOC sub-entities (Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (T-FAIR), Task Force on Digital Equality, and Silicon Valley Working Group) have requested mandate extensions for 2022.

**Action >>** Friends of the Chair to review FOC sub-entities mandate extension requests by **COB Friday, 3 December**. *[NB - Please note that there have been no objections to any of the mandate extensions.]*

- SU provided an update on finance.
- SU provided an update on upcoming events:
  - Internal Events
    - 29 November at 14:30 - 16:00 UTC - Joint FOC and FOC-AN Roundtable
    - 15 December - FOC-AN Monthly Call
    - 22 December (TBC) - Friends of the Chair call
    - December (dates TBC)
      - Task Force on Digital Equality Monthly Call
      - T-FAIR monthly call
      - Silicon Valley Working Group Monthly Call
  - External events
    - December 6-10 - IGF

- December 8 at 15:15 - 16:15 UTC - IGF FOC Open Forum on Internet Governance in the 2020s.
- IGF Virtual Booth - showcasing 10 years of FOC Joint Statements.

### Progress Updates - [Program of Action 2021](#)

- SU presented progress made against the activities outlined in the Program of Action 2021.

### Lessons Learned: Diplomatic Coordination

- SU noted that in 2021, it has been highlighted by Members that to enhance the Coalition's impact going forward, there is a need for a greater focus on FOC diplomatic coordination – both at capital level and through FOC diplomatic networks.
- SU invited Members to share lessons learned and discuss best practices for FOC diplomatic coordination, focusing on the local networks in Geneva, Paris, and New York.
  - General lessons from network leads:
    - Finland emphasised it is burdening for one Member to chair all diplomatic networks, and advocated for co-chairship of local networks to give more Members an opportunity to lead.
    - Finland, US and Canada suggested limiting the focus of the diplomatic leads on a smaller number of issues and processes, to ensure quality of outputs.
    - Finland, US and Canada suggested network leads are identified early in the year, and that priorities and working methods are planned in advance in order for the FOC to play a relevant role in negotiations and processes.
    - Finland emphasised that the local diplomatic networks are a strong tool for external advocacy.
  - Lessons from New York:
    - US noted that leading the New York network was challenging due to a packed schedule of the UN General Assembly Committees, and suggested that future leads are involved in the work of the Third Committee.
      - Austria noted the benefit of engaging in the first half of the year, to draw attention to FOC's priorities.
  - Lessons from Paris:
    - Canada emphasised the importance of FOC's engagement in Paris with civil society organisations and various tech experts.
    - Canada acknowledged the effort of the FOC in the negotiations within the UNESCO General Conference, specifically on the applicability of international human rights law in relation to the UNESCO Recommendations on the Ethics of AI.
  - Germany noted that it would seek to reduce administrative burden incurred by the FOC's work.
  - Austria noted that regional dialogue is crucial for the FOC to be perceived as a strong and visible Coalition.

### Discussion Items

- Country-Specific Statements
  - Finland noted its proposal for the FOC to include both thematic elements, and mentions of situations related to human rights occurring around the world.
  - The proposal aims to encourage proactive engagement and strengthen the Coalition's advocacy.
  - The proposal suggests statements to be issued on behalf of either:
    - The whole Coalition, i.e. by consensus; or
    - The Members of the Coalition, i.e. opt-in option.

- The process of issuing Country-Specific Statements will have implications on the Stockholm Terms of Reference and on the working methods of the FOC.
- Finland noted that the proposal will be circulated to FOC Members, and highlighted required amendments to the Stockholm Terms of Reference which will be placed under silence procedure. *[NB - The proposal will be circulated to the Members again, and Members will be notified when the silence procedure is initiated.]*
  - Provided that there are no objections, the FOC will adopt the new policy.
- US noted that the issuance of Country-Specific Statements, additional to thematic statements, would supplement the work of the FOC in international fora, and would prevent the FOC from being excluded from the global dialogue.
- Germany, France, and Austria suggested for Country-Specific Statements to be brought on exceptional basis, as to not undermine the work of the FOC in other international fora.
  - US suggested that the option of issuing Country-Specific Statements may be used when bilateral outreach has not been successful.
  - France proposed that they are issued during the HRC's regular sessions, and noted that provided there is no consensus, the opt-in option is a good way forward.
  - Japan expressed its support, agreeing with the suggestions of France.
- Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden expressed their support for the proposal.
- Switzerland supported the proposal, but emphasised the need to strive for consensus-based decisions.

**Action >>** Finland to share the proposal outlining required amendments to the Stockholm Terms of Reference in order for the FOC to issue Country-Specific Statements for silence procedure by the second week of December.

- Program of Action for 2022
  - Canada noted that the first draft of the POA is being consolidated.
  - Canada will be consulting with the AN before the draft is circulated to the FOC Members for a second round of comments.

**Action >>** Canada to share the second draft of the Program of Actions with the FOC for comments.

- Joint FOC/ AN Roundtable Agenda
  - Taking place after the SCM, the Joint Roundtable provides opportunity to raise awareness of the key items for discussion that the AN will raise, including:
    - Program of Action 2022
    - Country-Specific Statements
    - FOC's role in the changing Internet freedom landscape

## **AOB**

- Poland raised the possibility of revitalising the diplomatic network in Vienna in 2022.
  - Poland will chair the OSCE in 2022 and aims to maintain the issues related to the promotion and protection of human rights in the digital sphere on its agenda in the organisation.