FREEDOM
ONLINE
COALITION

FREEDOM ONLINE COALITION PROGRAM OF ACTION 2022

DIGITAL INCLUSION: A DEMOCRATIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED VISION FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

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FOC Mission Statement

The Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) is a group of 34 governments, working in consultation with a multi-stakeholder network, deeply committed to the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also believe that the same human rights people enjoy offline must be protected online. We commit to working together, and with all others who share these views, to support Internet freedom and protect human rights – such as the rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and privacy rights online – worldwide. The FOC aims to be a proactive coalition that ensures Internet freedom issues are on the international agenda in order to drive concrete policy outcomes. The FOC's core documents are available here.

Background

The Program of Action outlines the FOC's vision, priorities and activities for 2022. It was developed by Canada as the FOC 2022 Chair, in consultation with FOC member states and FOC Advisory Network members. Face-to-face meetings may be replaced by virtual events, subject to the evolution of the public health situation.

Context

Digital technologies and the Internet have the potential to promote and protect democracy, human rights and inclusion. Nevertheless, current trends, including the rise of digital authoritarianism, are accelerating the global erosion of democracy, particularly in the context of COVID-19, and are leading to exclusion online and offline, affecting especially women and persons or groups in a vulnerable situation, such as children, persons with disabilities and older persons, and other persons belonging to marginalized and vulnerable communities. For example, we are seeing increasing instances of intentional disruptions to online networks and internet shutdowns, attacks on freedom of expression online, the arbitrary or unlawful deployment of surveillance technology, and the proliferation of disinformation online. Moreover, digital divides are widening, which exacerbates gender and other inequalities among and within countries. These unprecedented challenges illustrate the need to advocate with renewed vigor for a free, open, interoperable, secure and reliable internet and to stop the advance of digital authoritarianism.

Vision

In 2022, the FOC will redouble our efforts to advance Internet freedom and human rights online for the coming decade, as articulated in the FOC 10th Anniversary Helsinki Declaration. We will be guided by a shared vision of democracy in the digital age, namely digital inclusion: informed and engaged publics that can participate meaningfully in society, both online and offline. Digital inclusion rests on four pillars: reliable and meaningful **connectivity** and access, bridging digital divides worldwide; **digital literacy**, ensuring all users are empowered to navigate a more diverse online ecosystem; **civic participation**, free from oppressive practices such as unduly restrictive censorship and Internet disruptions and shutdowns; and promoting the **safety** for everyone of the online ecosystem.

Priorities

The FOC will advance digital inclusion by affirming and shaping global norms, promoting multi-stakeholder engagement, and ramping up advocacy, communication and outreach. The FOC will leverage its existing infrastructure, including its Diplomatic Networks, Task Forces and Working Groups, the multi-stakeholder Advisory Network, and high-level FOC meetings. We are committed to finding ways to enhance the effectiveness and visibility of the Coalition. The Coalition will promote an intersectional approach to this work.

1) Affirming and Shaping Global Norms

The FOC will work to affirm and shape global norms by strengthening and expanding diplomatic networks, coordinated by local FOC representatives, to share information, coordinate positions and advance strategies to promote Internet freedom and human rights online in priority forums, including:

Activities:

- At the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council, coordinate ahead of relevant negotiations and collaborate in order to promote human rights in online and digital contexts.
- At the UN Open Ended Working group, coordinate ahead of negotiations and collaborate to promote and support human rights and the multi-stakeholder approach in discussions on responsible state behaviour in cyber space and the application of international law in this context.
- At the United Nations General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Cybercrime Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes, deepen international cooperation to ensure that measures to secure the online ecosystem respect human rights.
- At the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), reinforce the protection of human rights as central in all discussions of the governance of digital technology and the internet.
- At the Organization of American States (OAS), support the Americas Dialogue on Freedom of Expression Online.
- At the Council of Europe, notably the Committee on Artificial Intelligence, ensure collaboration where relevant to elaborate an appropriate legal framework on the development, design, and application of artificial intelligence, based on the Council of Europe's standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
- Promote existing frameworks, such as the UN guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD AI principles and UNESCO's recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence to counter repressive and authoritarian deployment of AI systems, through inter-alia collaboration with the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders.
- Facilitate collaboration with other likeminded international initiatives, where appropriate, such as the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC), the Partnership on Information and Democracy, and International IDEA in pursuit of shared objectives.
- Develop a glossary of agreed-upon language from UN resolutions related to the mandate of the FOC to support negotiations at UN bodies.

2) Promoting Multi-stakeholder Engagement

The FOC will identify opportunities for greater multi-stakeholder engagement to promote expertise, diversity, inclusion, transparency and accountability, including:

Activities:
- Launch a multi-stakeholder process to develop a new set of "Recommendations for Freedom Online", updating the original "Tallinn Agenda" with a new "Ottawa Agenda".
- Support the work of the multi-stakeholder Task Force on Internet Shutdowns to address the growing trend of network disruptions, which undermine an open and pluralistic civic space online.
- Support the work of the multi-stakeholder Task Force on Digital Equality, including the implementation of the Joint Statement on Digital Inclusion.
- Support the work of the multi-stakeholder Task Force on AI and Human Rights, including the implementation of the Joint Statement on AI and Human Rights.
- Provide a platform for FOC governments, in consultation with the FOC Advisory Network, to elaborate a set of principles illustrating the responsible government use of surveillance technology in line with democratic values and respect for human rights.
- Work with multi-stakeholder partners, where appropriate, to promote evidenced-based policymaking to address online gender-based violence through research and advocacy efforts.
- Work with multi-stakeholder partners to develop a shared understanding of the way in which the principles of non-discrimination applies in digital contexts.
- Leverage the expertise of the Advisory Network to advise FOC members on best practices in developing national legislation to advance human rights online and overcome digital divides to ensure ubiquitous, affordable, equitable, and high-quality connectivity through workshops and learning calls.

3) Ramping up Advocacy, Communication and Outreach

The FOC will ramp up advocacy, communication and outreach to highlight abuses and worrying trends, to enhance our visibility and presence, and to grow our networks and welcome new members, including:

Activities:
- Call attention to egregious situations worldwide that undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms online and threaten the fabric of democratic societies.
- Launch a social media campaign to highlight the importance of digital inclusion and the FOC's work to promote it.
- Commit to making FOC Joint Statements and other foundational documents more accessible by translating them into other languages, such as French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and German.
- Collaborate with the FOC Advisory Network to create a toolkit for FOC members to use internally; for bilateral engagement; and in diplomatic networks.
- Support coordinating FOC members' existing funding resources on technology-related capacity building programs, identifying shared priorities and key target regions in the FOC's biannual Strategy and Coordination meetings, while sharing best practices.
- Invite non-FOC members to participate in FOC events, workshops, seminars, and side events, where appropriate.