

The Ottawa Agenda:

Recommendations for Freedom Online

Underpinning Document of the Freedom Online Coalition



The Ottawa Agenda: Recommendations for Freedom Online

Published January, 2023

We, the members of the Freedom Online Coalition...

- A. **Reaffirm** our commitment to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all, both online and offline, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments, as well as the Freedom Online Coalition's various statements and declarations, including the Tallinn Agenda and Helsinki Declaration,
- B. **Underline** the importance of multi-stakeholder co-operation, including governments, international organizations, civil society, private sector, academia, media, the technical community, and other relevant stakeholders, advocating for the development and use of digital technologies in ways that protect and reinforce democracy, human rights and the rule of law,
- C. **Underscore** our collective vision of democracy in the digital age, through the lens of digital inclusion, whereby informed and engaged societies can participate meaningfully and equitably in all aspects of society, both online and offline,
- D. **Emphasize** the need to overcome multiple, persistent digital divides, including the gender digital divide, and push back against the fragmentation of the global Internet, stressing that the free, open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet and digital technologies are critical for the protection of human rights online as well as social and economic development and inclusive governance,
- E. **Underline** the importance of digital literacy in realizing human rights and fundamental freedoms, including navigating diverse forms of online content, enabling access to reliable information to make informed decisions,
- F. **Reiterate** the fundamental importance of diverse, inclusive and protected civic participation online, while expressing concern at growing attempts to restrict civic space online, including through Internet shutdowns, network disruptions and censorship,
- G. **Acknowledge** that women and girls, as well as members of groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalization suffer disproportionately from the digital divide and the misuse and abuse of digital technologies, including online hate speech and online sexual and gender-based violence and harassment,
- H. **Stress** that individuals must be protected from violations and abuses of their rights online including through the arbitrary or unlawful deployment of surveillance technology, including spyware used to censor, intimidate, and silence individuals, notably journalists, human rights defenders, and political opponents,
- I. **Highlight with concern** the increasingly sophisticated threats to a healthy information ecosystem, which negatively impacts individuals' ability to share, receive, and impart ideas and information, and may lead to polarization, including through the abuse of algorithmic tools or techniques with the intent to amplify and prioritize targeted disinformation,
- J. **Note** that emerging digital technologies, including artificial intelligence systems, offer unprecedented opportunities for human development and innovation, with the potential to generate social and economic benefits and help protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, while remaining concerned by the documented, ongoing and possible use of such technologies in repressive, authoritarian, or discriminatory ways,



- K. Recognize** that effective efforts to promote transparency and accountability in the development and use of digital technologies improve respect for human rights protections by governments and other actors including the private sector.

Decide to:

- A. Affirm, shape and promote** global norms, standards and best practices in international and regional fora by strengthening and expanding FOC diplomatic networks to improve information sharing, coordinate positions, issue joint statements, and advance collective strategies,
- B. Commit** to inclusive and open multi-stakeholder governance of digital technologies, including the Internet, and to sustained dialogue with external stakeholders to share knowledge and expertise while proactively engaging with the FOC Advisory Network as they provide recommendations on statements, taskforce actions, time-sensitive threats to freedom online, and other activities that demand the attention of and action by the Coalition,
- C. Advance** digital inclusion internationally to promote a rules-based, democratic, and inclusive world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts, with the goal of ensuring everyone can fully enjoy their human rights online,
- D. Advocate** for a global, free, open, interoperable, secure and reliable Internet, to resist Internet fragmentation and promote accountable, inclusive, and responsive democratic societies, at priority forums, including the United Nations, while working towards overcoming digital divides, advocating for ubiquitous, secure, affordable, equitable, and high-quality connectivity,
- E. Support** policies, initiatives, education and research that increase digital literacy and empower individuals to think critically about the information they are consuming and sharing, effectively advocating for risk mitigation and to taking steps to keep themselves and others safe while navigating diverse online spaces,
- F. Take action** through diplomatic channels, public statements, and other means to collectively condemn egregious situations worldwide that undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms online – including the use of partial or complete Internet shutdowns and network restrictions – as well as highlight positive developments for human rights in digital contexts, while proactively building long-term civilian resilience to these threats,
- G. Collaborate** with domestic and international initiatives and partnerships that advocate for safe and equitable online spaces for everyone, elevating traditionally excluded voices, such as youth, women and girls, as well as persons or groups in a vulnerable situation, such as, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTI persons, racial and ethnic minorities, persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, persons with disabilities, and older persons, through the UN and other international fora, with specific focus on closing the gender digital divide and preventing and responding to the exposure of online gender-based violence, harassment and abuse,
- H. Cooperate to prevent** the misuse of surveillance technologies, including spyware, by working to ensure that digital technologies are designed, developed, deployed, disseminated, evaluated, and regulated in ways that reinforce and do not undermine democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and by promoting cyber secure and stable communications,
- I. Engage** in dialogue and cooperation with the private sector to address risks relating to digital transformation, such as disinformation, and committing to developing rules of the road for addressing information integrity online,



- J. **Promote** rights-respecting emerging digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, by sharing and disseminating information and collaborating on joint initiatives, and advance the application of the international human rights framework to the global governance of these technologies by engaging with ongoing international policy discussions and coordinating advocacy across different fora,
- K. **Lead** by example in upholding our commitments as members of the Coalition to respect our human rights obligations, as well as the principles of the rule of law, legitimate purpose, non-arbitrariness, effective oversight, while calling for greater transparency and accountability within the private sector, in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.



About the Freedom Online Coalition

The Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) is a multilateral coalition of 35 governments that collaborate to advance Internet freedom worldwide. The Coalition provides a forum for like-minded governments to coordinate efforts and work with civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to support the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms online. The FOC invites all states that support a free, open, secure, and interoperable Internet to apply to join the FOC.

The mission and vision of the FOC are founded upon the notion that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online; a pioneering notion originally outlined in the founding FOC Hague Declaration, reaffirmed in the Nairobi Terms of Reference, Tallinn Agenda, and San José Statement, and further confirmed in UN Human Rights Council resolutions 20/8, 26/13, 28/16, and 32/13, adopted July 5, 2012, June 26, 2014, March 26, 2015, and July 1, 2016, respectively, as well as resolutions 68/167, 69/166, and 71/199 adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly respectively on December 18, 2013, December 18, 2014, and December 19, 2016.

The FOC seeks to identify best practices regarding the application of human rights obligations and commitments in the evolving online landscape, as well as to call attention to conditions that undermine those rights.

To learn more and view FOC documents, visit www.freedomonlinecoalition.com.

