FREEDOM ONLINE COALITION
PROGRAM OF ACTION 2020

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this Program of Action, its priority areas, appropriate working methods, and schedule of activities may be subject to change by the Friends of the Chair of the Coalition. (note added April 2020)

FOC Mission Statement

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

Background

The Program of Action 2020 outlines FOC's priority areas and activities for the year 2020, as identified by FOC Members. Activities will be carried out over the course of 2020, following the conclusion of Ghana's chairmanship in February 2020. This document has been developed by members of the FOC.

Priority Areas and Rationale

Global Internet freedom continued to decline for the 9th consecutive year in 2019[1], as old challenges to human rights online persisted, and new ones emerged.

The FOC has made meaningful contributions to the global debate on Internet censorship, network disruptions, cross-border attacks on freedom of expression online, and the trend of closing civic space. Unfortunately, these trends continue to directly challenge the exercise of human rights and an open and interoperable Internet, as affirmed in the FOC's 'Tallinn Agenda'. In 2020, the FOC intends to continue to leverage this work by promoting existing FOC language in relevant global forums and discussions.

In addition, FOC continues to be committed to shaping global norms on priority areas identified in 2019 which continue to be relevant to the Coalition's agenda, including digital inclusion, the promotion and protection of human rights online in the context of cybersecurity, challenges to human rights caused by misinformation / disinformation, and potential human rights implications of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies including next generation wireless communications such as 5G. The FOC also continues to engage with the Christchurch Call and other forums that work to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

In 2020, FOC remains committed to tackling these challenges through its key working methods[2] – diplomatic coordination, shaping of global norms, and commitment to multistakeholder engagement – and specific activities outlined below.

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[1] https://www.freedomonthenet.org/report/freedom-on-the-net/2019/the-crisis-of-social-media

[2] Based on the Stockholm Terms of Reference.

FOC Working Methods

The FOC endeavours to carry out its activities in 2020 through the following working methods:

Diplomatic Coordination:
- Capital-level coordination of members;
- Coordination via local network in Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna;
- Bilateral discussions with other countries.

Shaping of Global Norms:
- Developing and promoting FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions;
- Raising awareness of priority issue areas and their implications for human rights online through public workshops/events.

Multistakeholder Engagement:
- Drawing on expertise and networks of Advisory Network to maximize impact;
- Quarterly FOC-AN coordination calls to share information and explore opportunities for action;
- Annual Freedom Online Conference to increase awareness of Internet freedom issues and strategize for change;
- Public outreach events (Open Forums and speaking engagements) to increase awareness and collaboration.

Activities by Priority Areas

Digital Inclusion
- Promote Joint Statement on "Digital Inclusion" in relevant international forums and resolutions, including the March Human Rights Council (HRC).
- Facilitate coordination of FOC members via local networks, with emphasis on engagement in the HRC.

Cybersecurity and Human Rights
- Promote Joint Statement on "Human Rights Impact of Cybersecurity Laws, Practices and Policies" in relevant international forums and resolutions,
- Facilitate coordination of FOC members via local networks, with emphasis on engagement in the UN OEWG, GGE, First and Third Committee.

Disinformation
- Finalise Joint Statement on "Tackling Online Disinformation" and coordinate strategy around its use with FOC and FOC-AN.
- Promote Joint Statement on "Tackling Online Disinformation" in relevant international forums and resolutions.

Artificial Intelligence
- Develop Joint Statement on "Internet Freedom Implications of Artificial Intelligence" and coordinate strategy around its use with FOC and FOC-AN.
- Promote Joint Statement on "Internet Freedom Implications of Artificial Intelligence" in relevant international forums and resolutions.
- Facilitate coordination of FOC members via local networks, with emphasis on engagement at UNESCO.

Schedule of Activities, 1 March – 31 December 2020

The following indicates the provisional activities that the FOC endeavours to carry out to both directly address Internet freedom challenges and increase the Coalition's ability to respond by strengthening its operations. The activities outlined may be adapted in response to emerging trends.

First Quarter: January, February, March

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions, including the March HRC.
- Continue strengthening relationships among FOC members and build capacity of diplomatic networks via side sessions and learning calls.
- Develop dissemination strategies for FOC joint statements.
- Conduct a strategic review of existing FOC Statements and identify language to leverage in relevant multilateral forums.

Second Quarter: April, May, June

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions including the June HRC.
- Continue strengthening relationships among FOC members and build capacity of diplomatic networks via side sessions and learning calls.
- Finalise Joint Statement on "Tackling Online Disinformation" and coordinate strategy around its use with FOC and FOC-AN.
- Raise awareness of priority issues through public workshops/events including at World Press Freedom Conference (22-24 April) and RightsCon (9-12 June).
- Strengthen mechanisms for FOC and FOC-AN information sharing to facilitate coordination, including at FOC Strategy and Coordination Meetings.

Third Quarter: July, August, September

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions including the September HRC, UNGA First and Third Committee.
- Develop Joint Statement on "Internet Freedom Implications of Artificial Intelligence" and coordinate strategy around its use with FOC and FOC-AN.
- Raise awareness of priority issues through public workshops/events including at Global Conference for Media Freedom.
- Strengthen FOC and FOC-AN work streams inspired by learning calls and other topics of interest.

Fourth Quarter: October, November, December

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions.
- Finalise Joint Statement on ""Internet Freedom Implications of Artificial Intelligence"" and coordinate strategy around its use with FOC and FOC-AN.
- Raise awareness of priority issue areas through public workshops/events including at IGF (2-6 November).
- Strengthen mechanisms for FOC and FOC-AN information sharing to facilitate coordination, including at FOC Strategy and Coordination Meetings.