

Friends of the Chair Meeting #5

Wednesday, 24 May 2023

Attended: US (Chair 2023); Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ghana, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK; Support Unit (SU)

Housekeeping

- Support Unit (SU) provided an update on the June Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) taking place in San Jose, Costa Rica, and noted:
 - In-person SCM participants need to register for RightsCon by Monday, 29 May. *[Please note this deadline has passed.]*
 - 17 FOC Member states and 20 Advisory Network (FOC-AN) Members have registered to attend the SCM in person.
 - Members have received a document pack for the SCM, which includes the final agenda, discussion papers, logistics information, and a list of FOC-related RightsCon receptions, sessions and meetings.
 - Friends of the Chair (FotC) will have an informal dinner on Sunday, 4 June ahead of the SCM; the SU will share the details soon.
- SU highlighted that sub-entities are preparing 10 minute presentations to highlight respective deliverables, noting the presentation will be an opportunity to check-in before the possible high-level event in September.
 - US noted that they will seek to identify deliverables through the sub-entity presentations that foreign ministers can announce at the high-level meeting and encouraged sub-entity leads to consider this framing as they develop their presentations.
- Switzerland noted they are hosting an FOC reception on Wednesday, 7 June at the Ambassador's residence, and that more details on the event will be included in the SCM document pack.

Discussion Items

Revision of the Stockholm Terms of Reference (ToR)

- SU noted revision of the ToR is a discussion item on the FOC-only meeting agenda at the SCM.
- SU highlighted the FotC ToR revision discussion was an opportunity for FotC Members to check-in on whether the draft document is ready to share with the wider Coalition.
 - The US and FotC Members were thanked for their work and engagement in the ToR revision process.
 - During the period for FotC sign-off on the first draft, a final comment was provided by Finland. The comment was integrated into the first draft and shared with the FotC for another 24 hour sign-off, receiving no objections.
 - US reiterated the rationale for the edit, highlighting that 'treaty bodies' was removed (III.b.7) as it can be encompassed under "other relevant existing processes".
 - US noted that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process was still listed, suggesting that Members could include a short paragraph about their domestic and international efforts around FOC issue areas.
- Germany noted input from Ghana from a prior ToR revision meeting concerning increased FOC commitments and flagging that heightened commitments may impact global South government interest in engaging with the FOC.

- Germany noted a major goal of the FOC is to attract greater global South engagement, it was suggested that greater consideration of global South governments' interests and concerns be taken into account.
- Netherlands suggested requesting input from the Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE).
 - US noted that the FOC-AN has already been invited to provide input into the ToR revisions and that they will have an opportunity to provide further input on the first draft of ToR revisions.
- US noted that current ToR revisions are being undertaken with the aim to clarify FOC processes and ways of engaging in the Coalition.
- SU received no objections from the FotC to sharing the first draft of ToR revisions with the wider Coalition.
- The FotC agreed to cancel the last ToR revision meeting, scheduled for Thursday, 25 May.
- SU noted the first draft of ToR revisions will be shared with both FOC and FOC-AN ahead of the June SCM. FOC Members will have until 18 June to submit comments on the first draft of the ToR revisions. *[Please note the deadline to submit comments has changed to 30 June following deliberations with the US.]*
- Members confirmed the draft ToR revisions were ready to share with the wider Coalition and agreed to cancel the last ToR revision meeting, scheduled for Thursday, 25 May.

Engaging with Supranational Organisations

- SU noted engagement with supranational organisations is a discussion item on the Joint Roundtable agenda at the SCM.
 - SU noted engaging with supranational organisations is an action point from the [Program of Action \(PoA\) 2023](#) (Goal 3); and a continuation of what was discussed during the March SCM.
- SU noted that, based on these discussions, a proposed set of activities for potential FOC liaisons interacting on behalf of the FOC in supranational organisations were developed and shared with the FotC ahead of the meeting, which was noted as an opportunity to discuss the document ahead of the June SCM Joint Roundtable meeting.
- US noted the aim is to have FOC liaisons serve as a bridge between the FOC and various supranational organisations, and highlighted that at the SCM they will be looking to FOC Members to volunteer to be liaisons.
 - US noted they also sent out demarches to FOC countries, encouraging Members to volunteer as liaisons.
 - US noted efforts for engagement with supranational organisations are aimed at preventing duplication across the work of the FOC and other organisations.
 - US noted that pilot FOC engagement with a supranational organisation can be determined following identifying which FOC Members will volunteer to be liaisons.
- Switzerland asked for more clarity around the envisioned activities.
 - US noted FOC Members may volunteer to share information with FOC regarding the activities of a supranational organisation of which they are also a member, annually or bi-annually.
 - Denmark noted caution around potential information fatigue, and suggested supranational organisation updates could take place during FOC SCMs.
 - US encouraged Denmark to raise these points in the June SCM discussions.
- US noted they look towards the June SCM discussions to clarify any details and questions, including:
 - The June SCM will be an opportunity to discuss next steps with the wider FOC and to identify which supranational organisations the FOC should track during the pilot phase.

- Germany asked for clarity regarding the decision-making process to confirm the FOC liaison activity.
 - SU noted that following discussions at the SCM, the Chair will seek to articulate a proposal and share it with Members for consideration.

Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM)

- SU noted the RRM is a discussion item on the Joint Roundtable agenda at the SCM.
 - A one-pager summarising the ongoing discussions on the RRM was shared ahead of the FotC meeting and has now been shared with the broader Coalition in the SCM document pack.
- SU noted the RRM discussion is in line with the [PoA 2023](#) (Goal 1, Objective 1B), and the concept has been introduced in the revised ToR draft under 'Working Methods (II.b)'.
 - US asked FOC-AN to provide initial thoughts/ recommendations which will lay the groundwork for a discussion ahead of the development of a comprehensive memo by July 2023, which will be up for the FOC's consideration.
 - FOC and FOC-AN Members interested in participating in the development of the recommendations can reach out to SU.
- SU invited Members to raise thoughts and concerns.
 - US noted that concerns around the Coalition's responsiveness and reserved engagement in public conversation concerning threats to Internet freedom have been expressed previously.
 - Switzerland noted it would be helpful to have a conversation on the RRM and what the Coalition's work would look like if Members choose not to pursue this.
 - Switzerland noted the need to define the scope and process of the mechanism, including what kinds of issues would warrant rapid responses and what kinds of rapid responses the Coalition could deliver.
 - Canada noted their support for the initiative and also flagged the need to take into consideration Member capacity when developing RRM.
 - Netherlands asked whether RRM came up in the context of the [Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns in Iran](#) in 2022.
 - US noted discussions on RRM had begun before, but that the Joint Statement further inspired the conversation.
 - Canada noted they have implemented a practice of issuing country and issue-specific statements to respond to various issues as they arise, during their Chairship in 2022, and suggested for the FOC to continue this practice going forward.
 - Germany noted it would be preferable to have further discussions on the RRM firstly within the FotC, and subsequently with the wider FOC Membership, followed by conversations with the FOC-AN.
 - US noted that given the FOC-AN's wide-range of expertise, they were invited to provide advice, which Coalition Members can use as a starting point for further FOC discussions.
 - SU suggested adding RRM as a discussion item to the FOC Member-only meeting at the June SCM.
 - Germany noted the importance of following procedures when making any decisions related to the RRM.

Program of Action 2023

- US suggested moving PoA updates to the FOC Member meeting at the June SCM due to time constraints.

- As there were no FotC objections to this suggestion, PoA updates from the May monthly meeting will be shared during the June SCM.