

Freedom Online Coalition

Strategy & Coordination Meeting, June 2023

Monday, 5 June | Costa Rica Convention Center, San José, Costa Rica



FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting - Report

5 June, 2023 | San José, Costa Rica

The second FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) in 2023 took place on 5 June in San José, Costa Rica, and included hybrid participation from 20 FOC Members, 1 Observer, and 22 FOC Advisory Network Members.

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Session Summaries

Monday 5 June | National Convention Center, San José, Costa Rica

FOC Member Meeting

9:00 - 10:30 CST

Participants: FOC / Observers / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

Juliana Borbón Beeche from the Department of International Law and Human Rights of Costa Rica, provided welcome remarks, followed by opening remarks by Scott Busby, US Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. The Support Unit (SU) shared housekeeping updates, noting that Iceland recently became the 37th Member of the FOC, and internal updates on the efforts to confirm the 2024 FOC Chairship. The SU also updated Members on the progress of implementing the Program of Action (PoA) 2023, highlighting Membership, diplomatic coordination, shaping global norms, and multistakeholder engagement activities. Members discussed the [Stockholm Terms of Reference](#) updates and revisions, noting overall support for the process. Under AOB, Members discussed plans for the remainder of 2023, and shared ideas on how the Coalition can further focus on learning to improve collaboration and the shaping of global norms.

FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) Meeting

9:00 - 10:30 CST

Participants: FOC-AN / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

The FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) discussed the development of a rapid response toolkit, exploring opportunities for FOC-AN engagement, including by utilising FOC-AN proactive advice, and discussing issues, such as accountability. Ahead of the Joint Roundtable meeting with FOC Member states, FOC-AN Members also deliberated on FOC engagement with supranational and/or regional organisations. In addition, FOC Membership expansion was raised, with FOC-AN Members expressing interest in supporting the application process and exploring what role, if any, the FOC-AN could have in prospective Member outreach. FOC-AN Members highlighted the importance of ensuring applicants adhere to FOC commitments. The meeting was closed with an update on FOC-AN resources that are available and/or are under development.

Sub-Entity Presentations

11:00 - 12:00 CST

Participants: FOC / Observers / FOC-AN / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE): Ghana, Task Force co-Chair, provided background on the TFDE mandate and updated on their work since the March SCM. TFDE co-Chairs from the FOC-AN further highlighted the activities of the Task Force, noting ongoing collaborative research projects undertaken with Duke University, and noted plans to organise a learning call with the broader FOC to share findings from the research project and explore the human rights implications of access and use of digital technologies. TFDE noted plans to collaborate with Canada's International Development Research Centre to conduct an assessment on areas where the Coalition can strengthen diversity and inclusivity internally.

Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TFAIR): Germany, Task Force Chair, noted that the International Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL) recently became a co-Chair of the Task Force. Germany noted plans to facilitate thematic deep dives on generative AI and its implications for human rights and cybersecurity, as well as on ethical concerns around data accumulation and privacy rights in relation to AI-driven technologies. Germany noted plans to hold discussions on the Global Digital Compact and AI and on approaching the question



of AI regulation from a human rights perspective. Regarding deliverables, TFAIR noted they were looking to compile platform reporting tools on AI, and were exploring the possibility of developing an FOC coordinated action tool to address misuses of AI technologies.

Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS): UK, Access Now, and the Global Network Initiative, Task Force co-Chairs, provided an update on the progress of their work plan, noting that Taiwan joined the Task Force and encouraged Coalition Members to consider joining. TFIS provided an update on their four lines of work: knowledge-sharing, response coordination, norm-shifting, and improving data collection. In terms of activities, the Task Force highlighted three deep dive learning sessions, which covered topics including digital rights in Iran, Access Now's #KeepItOn report, and shutdowns in India, as well as securing a commitment in the G7 Digital Declaration to tackling Internet shutdowns and restrictions. TFIS noted plans for the rest of the year, highlighting HRC53 and UNGA as opportunities to advance language on Internet shutdowns in multilateral spaces, as well as country-specific and thematic resolutions. The UK noted they will be hosting the UNESCO International Day of Universal Access to Information in September, with a focus on Internet shutdowns.

Silicon Valley Working Group (SVWG): Canada, Working Group Chair, noted a breakfast side-event organised in partnership with the European Center for Not-For-Profit Law that took place during the Game Developers Conference in March. The Working Group highlighted the plans for a number of upcoming events, including a B-Tech consultation on gender, tech and the role of business in June, and on information integrity. SVWG noted they are also exploring hosting a side-event during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in November, and are conducting consultations with prospective partners to determine the content and framing of the event.

Other: Denmark provided an update on the status of the potential FOC Task Force on Trustworthy Internet Online, noting that the Task Force concept note is being revised, and will be submitted to the FOC for approval once finalised.

Learning Session: Trends Impacting Human Rights in the Digital Technology Space: Challenges, Opportunities and Pathways Forward

13:00 - 13:50 CST

Participants: FOC / Observers / FOC-AN / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

FOC-AN Members organised a learning session to explore the trends impacting human rights in the digital technology space. The session was moderated by the FOC-AN co-Chairs and featured FOC-AN panellists Elizabeth Orembo (Research ICT Africa), Amalia Toledo (Wikimedia Foundation), Edetaen Ojo (Media Rights Agenda), and Zachery Lampell (ICNL). Panellists highlighted thematic areas where the FOC should direct its efforts, such as advancing digital inclusion and accessibility, addressing the use of AI-driven technologies, in addition to gaining a deeper understanding on why state and non-state actors violate human rights. The panellists identified the FOC's sub-entities as relevant platforms to build capacity of government officials, develop methods to address these issues via multistakeholder collaboration, and further measure the effectiveness of existing mechanisms within the FOC.

FOC Members suggested analysing the motivating factors behind countries' rationale for shutting down the Internet and exploring actions that the FOC can take to address human rights violations. In addition, FOC Members further noted interest in exploring how the FOC can achieve a positive impact on the ground in response to such violations, and the importance of engaging on priority issues with humility and a commitment to learning. It was also noted that in some regions there exists a clash between the right to information and the right to privacy; thus, the challenge of negotiating these rights in policy development.



FOC and FOC-AN Joint Roundtable Meeting

14:00 - 15:30 CST

Participants: FOC/ Observers/ FOC-AN / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

The Joint Roundtable centred around two key topics: 1) tools and methods that would enable the FOC to rapidly respond to urgent Internet freedom crises and human rights violations, and 2) ways in which the Coalition could collaborate with supranational and regional organisations to address challenges that arise at the intersection of human rights and technology. FOC and FOC-AN Members discussed the issues that would warrant a response from the FOC, processes and methods to use, and the range of action steps. In the coming months, the FOC and FOC-AN multistakeholder rapid response working group, will aim to propose a “toolbox” of options for Members to consider. FOC and FOC-AN Members continued conversations from the [March SCM](#) held in Washington D.C. exploring possible mechanisms to strengthen coordination and collaboration with supranational and regional organisations, including members acting as liaisons between the FOC and a supranational or regional organisation, as well as which organisations to prioritise.

Action>> FOC and FOC-AN Members interested in joining the FOC and FOC-AN multistakeholder working group for rapid responses should email the Support Unit to express interest.



Annex 1: Agenda (abridged)

Time (CST)	Topic	Attendance
9.00	FOC Members Meeting	FOC Members; Observers; Support Unit
	FOC Advisory Network Meeting	FOC-AN
10.30	Coffee Break (30 minutes)	All
11.00	Updates from FOC Sub-Entities	All
12.00	Lunch Break (1 hour)	All
13.00	Learning Session: <i>Trends Impacting Human Rights in the Digital Technology Space: Challenges, Opportunities and Pathways Forward</i>	All
13.50	Break (10 minutes)	All
14.00	FOC & FOC-AN Joint Roundtable Meeting	All
15.30	End of Day	

Annex 3: Minutes

FOC Members Meeting

Monday, 5 June | 9:00 - 10:30

Attended:

Members: US, FOC Chair 2023; Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK; Support Unit

Observer: Taiwan

Welcome Remarks

- The Support Unit (SU) welcomed FOC Members to the second Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) in 2023, taking place on the margins of RightsCon in San José.
 - The SU thanked Canada, Switzerland, and the US for their contributions that allowed civil society to attend the SCM.
- Juliana Borbón Beeche, from the Department of International Law and Human Rights of Costa Rica provided welcome remarks, noting Costa Rica's support for the FOC and commitment to the Coalition's ongoing efforts to advance human rights online.
- Scott Busby, US Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, FOC Chair 2023, followed with opening remarks, thanking Access Now for hosting RightsCon, highlighting the work and commitments made by the FOC during Costa Rica's Chairship in 2016 and the importance of continuing to advance FOC priorities.

Housekeeping

- The SU provided an overview of the SCM and RightsCon agenda [please see [Annex 4](#) for the summaries of the FOC RightsCon sessions and side-event], and noted the following updates on the Internal Program of Action:



- Membership / Chairship 2024:
 - Iceland became the 37th Member of the Coalition.
- Finance:
 - Fundraising for 2024 will continue; Members interested in contributing are invited to reach out to the SU.
- Comms:
 - SU noted efforts to build upon internal communications tools and resources for Members, including the development of the FOC Digital Hub for FOC capital and diplomatic networks points of contact, and welcomed feedback from Members.
 - SU highlighted the development of a language mapping tool which will enable Members to easily access agreed-upon language from the Coalition based on various themes and categories, and which will be available on the FOC Digital Hub.
- SU provided progress updates on the implementation of the PoA 2023.

Discussion Items

Stockholm Terms of Reference Revisions and Updates

- Scott Busby, US Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provided an overview of the reasoning and motivation for pursuing a revision of the ToR, including improving clarity around how the Coalition functions, future-proofing the ToR, ensuring that the FOC can remain agile as it expands, and addressing the FOC-AN's calls for more transparency and accountability.
 - During the March SCM in Washington D.C., the FOC agreed to begin the formal process of ToR revisions; following two months of consultation with a drafting committee made up of the Friends of the Chair (FotC), FotC Members developed a first draft that has been shared with the Coalition for input [*Please note that the deadline to submit written comments to the First Draft is 30 June. Following the deadline, comments will be consolidated into a second draft and shared with the FOC for redline edits.*].
- SU provided a summary of the substantive changes proposed by the FotC, categorised by sections.
- SU noted a point of agreement among FotC Members has been the FOC's commitment to consensus.
 - Denmark noted support for the Coalition's strong emphasis on consensus, and expressed hope that the FOC can contribute to some of the maturing of UN language around human rights.
- Finland inquired about how PoA updates are developed and shared with the FOC.
- Upon Finland's query about the nature of the SU's annual reporting, SU clarified that it would look to develop a summary report at the end of the year.

AOB

- Switzerland confirmed the 14th and 15th of November for the Geneva SCM.
- US noted their goal to establish the FOC as a multistakeholder base for discussion that shapes global norms in the Internet freedom and tech and human rights spaces, and invited FOC Members to share input on how to further this goal.
 - UK noted that the FOC is a key instrument for shaping the international order, recognising the need for action to reach local levels, and highlighted that the Coalition should collectively investigate the best way to achieve impact.
 - US noted the development of rapid response tools was added to the PoA 2023 to be responsive to challenges on the ground.
 - Switzerland inquired whether the FOC can support the GDC process and ensure the impact of normative language in a shared international space.
 - Scott Busby, US Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor noted that the FOC could play a significant role in the GDC process, and noted opportunities for support between diplomats on the ground and Capital.



- Finland suggested considering the utility of the FOC from a national perspective, and noted the need to work proactively to identify priority issues before they become political.
- Denmark suggested allocating more time during SCMs for discussion and capacity-building, highlighting that shaping global norms is a key function of the FOC, and noting insufficient time and bandwidth issues for FOC Members to meaningfully engage in the current and previous SCM.
 - SU highlighted the capacity-building element in the revised ToR, and suggested further discussing this opportunity at the SCM in Geneva in November.
 - US welcomed the possibility of exploring opportunities for building the capacity of FOC POCs.

FOC and FOC-AN Joint Roundtable Meeting **Monday, 5 June | 14:00 - 15:30**

Attended:

Members: US, FOC Chair 2023; Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK; Support Unit
Observer: Taiwan

FOC-AN: Adeboye Adegoke, Idan Ben Yakir, Eileen Donahoe, Veronica Ferrari, Helen Harris, Elonnai Hickok (co-Chair), Victor Kapiyo, Zachery Lampell, Juan Carlos Lara, Emma Llanso, Frane Maroevic, Madeleine Masinsin, Laura O'Brien, Edetean Ojo, Elizabeth Orembo, Kyung Sin Park, Jason Pielemeier, Michael Samway, Sneha Shah, Bernard Shen, Sebastian Smart, Amalia Toledo, Tatiana Tropina (co-Chair), Alex Walden

Welcome Remarks

- The Support Unit (SU) welcomed FOC and Advisory Network (FOC-AN) Members and Observers to the Joint Roundtable Meeting and provided a summary of the discussions from the FOC Members meeting, including on the implementation of the Program of Action (PoA) 2023 and Internal PoA 2023, the First Draft of the revised Stockholm Terms of Reference (ToR), and opportunities for FOC engagement.
- FOC-AN co-Chairs provided a summary of the FOC-AN meeting, where Members discussed tools for FOC rapid responses, engagement with supranational and regional organisations, internal decision making around issuing formal and informal FOC-AN advice to the FOC, thematic trends and the use of the FOC [Guiding Principles on Government Use of Surveillance Technologies](#), FOC-AN resources for capacity building, and potential opportunities for the FOC-AN to support FOC Membership outreach.

Discussion items

FOC Rapid Response

- Scott Busby, US Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provided opening remarks on rapid responses as a diplomatic coordination method of the FOC, noting that the concept was incorporated into both the PoA 2023 and the ToR revisions.
 - The FOC and FOC-AN multistakeholder working group is developing a comprehensive set of recommendations for the FOC to consider in urgent situations warranting the FOC's response.
- FOC-AN Members noted the following questions for consideration:
 - What is the the FOC reacting to - what is the matrix of impact and/ or threshold for engagement?
 - How is the FOC reacting - which processes would be used and who would initiate? How can the FOC-AN support?
 - How can a rapid response be more actionable? How can the FOC create a sustainable mechanism that can be facilitated by the Chair? What lessons can be learned from previous actions and processes, and how can the FOC and FOC-AN coordinate effectively and learn from each other?



- FOC-AN Members encouraged FOC Members to consider joining the working group, highlighting the opportunity to develop the recommendations for rapid responses.
- FOC-AN Members highlighted the following points, which will be considered in the drafting of the document and will be shared with the FOC in the coming months:
 - Establishing a decision-making framework that is principled, practical, inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable across Chairs;
 - Conducting a comparative and internal review of processes for the sake of transparency;
 - Utilising thematic expertise of the sub-entities and encouraging engagement and cooperation between the Task Forces and Working Group;
 - Considering the different steps of engagement that can be taken (e.g. Joint Statements, opt-in statements, demarches, etc.) and expectations around dissemination of outputs; and
 - Considering governance and accountability internally, and how to ensure the process is dynamic and practical.
- FOC-AN co-Chair noted that the FOC-AN could aid the FOC in identifying issues requiring a response, emphasising the importance of coordination between the FOC, FOC-AN, and sub-entities.
 - SU noted it is the prerogative of the Chair to propose expediting the statement development process to the FotC.
 - SU also noted there is no strict criteria in the ToR on initiating such actions, but that there is a provision for the FOC-AN to trigger the statement development process.
 - Netherlands noted examples of when the FOC has effectively responded to situations warranting immediate reactions, including the [Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns in Iran](#), and the [2022 Chair statement on state-sponsored disinformation in Ukraine](#).
 - Netherlands noted there are certain topics, e.g. Internet shutdowns, which are politically easier to navigate than others, and emphasised the importance of distinguishing between rapid responses and “regular” statements.
 - The US noted it would be useful to have a way of responding to new or controversial legislation and regulation, and highlighted the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law’s (ICNL) model as good practice.
- Concerning funding, the US noted examples such as the Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP), LIFELINE, and the Human Rights Defenders Fund, and noted the need to identify and assess gaps in addressing Internet freedom issues.
- US asked participants for their input on issuing demarches and internal information-sharing as potential methods for rapid response engagement.
 - Netherlands noted the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS) best practices document as an available resource to share in emergency situations.
 - FOC-AN Members agreed that joint demarches could be a helpful and effective tool, citing Ethiopia as an example, and noted the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) system as follow up to issuing statements.
 - Estonia noted that demarches are an easy way to communicate, but questioned whether the countries receiving demarches would be able to receive clearance from Capital quickly enough.
 - Germany noted that naming and shaming would not be an effective method to change states’ behaviour, and suggested taking a discrete approach to flagging these types of issues.
- UK proposed an escalatory pyramid approach to flagging issues that would offer a menu of different options for FOC Members to consider, depending on the level of escalation, and cautioned against being too prescriptive.
 - FOC and FOC-AN Members agreed on coordinating localised responses through FOC embassies and missions on the ground as one of the methods to explore.
- The FOC-AN raised the option of making FOC-AN proactive advice public as an alternative to when the FOC cannot issue a quick response to timely issues.



- The US noted that this option could be explored, however that public perceptions need to be considered when opting for this option, as it might be perceived as a lack of response from the FOC governments.
- New Zealand noted the UN system is siloed and slow-moving, and noted that they see value in the smaller and more nimble coordination that is enabled through the FOC.
 - New Zealand queried the efficacy of the joint statement model in urgent instances questioning whether it is a process fit to address timely digital issues considering the length of drafting.
 - New Zealand suggested conducting assessments to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of FOC joint statements.
 - It was further noted that local networks might not feel comfortable being exclusively steered by Capital, and suggested hearing more from FOC Members closer to the area in question.
- Norway noted that rapid responses could be a way to engage more Coalition Members, and highlighted the need to think of tools other than joint statements that could spur action, without being counter-productive.
- Denmark noted the importance of learning from each other in good faith, and focusing on learning activities and opportunities that could be facilitated through the FOC.
- Estonia and Germany noted the importance of flexibility in situations needing urgent responses, and noted that those working on the ground will know best which messages should be shared.
- The FOC and FOC-AN multistakeholder working group noted that instead of creating prescriptive recommendations, it would work to develop a flexible toolbox for the FOC's consideration.

Action>> FOC and FOC-AN Members interested in joining the FOC and FOC-AN multistakeholder working group for rapid responses should email the Support Unit to express interest.

Supranational and regional organisation engagement

- SU provided an overview of previous FOC discussions on this topic during the March SCM, noting that the FOC is exploring ways in which it could collaborate with supranational and regional organisations to address challenges that arise at the intersection of human rights and technology.
- US noted they issued demarches to FOC capitals, notifying Members they are looking for volunteers to serve in a liaison capacity between the FOC and an organisation of focus listed in the FOC Liaison document.
 - Switzerland inquired about the US' process for issuing demarches about FOC Liaisons.
 - US noted that FOC Members with membership in an organisation of interest received a demarche.
- SU asked the FOC and FOC-AN to think about what organisations should be prioritised, and whether the following proposed activities for the FOC Liaison are within Member states' capacity.
 - Provide a briefing on the current work of the organisation to the FOC;
 - Provide a briefing on the FOC's current work to the organisation;
 - Share the organisation's relevant public documents, or updates on documents in development with FOC Members;
 - Share FOC public outputs with the organisation.
- On the organisations to be prioritised:
 - Estonia noted the FOC could provide a value-add in spaces like the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), highlighting the opportunity to impact principles and norms. However, it may be difficult for the liaison to be on equal footing in certain organisations as there are various, technically different discussions happening in the digital technology space.
 - Finland noted that it would be helpful to make a distinction between regional organisations as supranational bodies, and multilateral international systems such as the UN, and suggested focusing on regional organisations.



- US clarified that they were looking to engage with supranational and regional organisations since the FOC does a lot of work with multilateral and multinational organisations through the diplomatic networks.
 - Netherlands suggested the Council of Europe as a potential organisation to engage with, especially flagging the organisation's work around AI.
 - US and the UK noted the opportunity to strengthen diplomatic networks and empower local missions to engage.
 - Denmark noted the importance of having clear and strategic rationale when identifying which organisations the FOC should engage with.
 - UK noted the need to consider FOC Member bandwidth for engagement.
 - Costa Rica noted the importance of increasing FOC engagement among Latin American Members.
 - New Zealand emphasised the importance of engaging globally in good faith.
 - US suggested issuing a doodle poll to FOC and FOC-AN Members to identify priority organisations for engagement.
 - FOC-AN Members highlighted that there are certain organisations that set standards and principles, with various methods of engagement, and suggested adding information about mechanisms for engaging with these organisations into the rapid response toolbox.
- FOC-AN co-Chairs inquired on the FOC-AN's role to support FOC engagement with these organisations.
 - US noted they are open to exploring FOC-AN support, and opportunities for involvement would depend on FOC-AN Members' level of access and visibility within the organisations.

AOB

- The FOC-AN noted that there is no formal process for the FOC-AN to provide input into the prospective Member application process, and suggested exploring ways to do this, including by preparing proactive advice to support the report on the country's human rights record produced by the SU ([Stockholm Terms of Reference](#), III.a.).

Annex 4: RightsCon Sessions and Side-Event Summaries

Keeping Civic Actors Safe in an Age of Digital Repression | 10:30 - 12:30 CST, Tuesday, 6 June

Co-Hosted By: FOC Funding Coordination Group, Global Partners Digital, Internews

Hosted by the FOC's Funding Coordination Group, Global Partners Digital, and Internews, the workshop explored the practices of foreign assistance donors and discussed the risks faced by grantees and beneficiaries operating in contexts with increasing digital surveillance and repression. The main aims of the session were to better understand what internal donor processes, practices, and strategies could be refined or revamped to better protect the safety and security of those who implement and benefit from foreign assistance programs.

Participants were divided into breakout groups, which included government/donor representatives and civil society representatives, to discuss various aspects of the donor-beneficiary relationship, such as Communication; Procurement; Reporting; Ownership; and Multistakeholder Collaboration, to identify existing and emerging risks and opportunities and recommendations moving forward.

Key takeaways from these discussions included highlighting the importance of more personalised communication and relationship-building between donors and beneficiaries at every stage of the process; building greater flexibility into application and reporting processes, in terms of languages, templates and modalities of engagement used; and the role of donors to ensure strong coordination and multistakeholder networks, both amongst civil



society and between the private sector and civil society organisations. The insights gleaned from this conversation will provide inputs for discussions within donor agencies. They will also inform initial negotiations around a set of Donor Principles for the Digital Age, which will outline normative parameters for rights-respecting donor investments and engagements in digital contexts. The Donor Principles are USAID's Summit for Democracy deliverable under the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, and are being drafted and negotiated in the FOC with multistakeholder input.

Addressing Internet Disruption Through the FOC's Task Force on Internet Shutdowns | 16:30 - 17:30 CST, Tuesday, 6 June

Moderated By: TFIS co-Chairs (United Kingdom, Access Now, and the Global Network Initiative)

The Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS), co-chaired by the United Kingdom, Access Now, and the Global Network Initiative, hosted an in-person meeting at RightsCon to gather input on the mandate and future of TFIS. The co-Chairs re-capped the four core aims of the Task Force – knowledge-sharing, response coordination, norm-shifting, and improving data collection – and outlined broad intentions for TFIS in the remaining half of 2023, including facilitating more conversations with different industry sectors, developing a playbook on Internet shutdowns, and integrating the work of the Summit for Democracy Tech for Democracy Internet Shutdowns workstream into TFIS activities.

Participants noted the benefit of TFIS as a space to connect companies, governments, and CSOs on shutdowns and to coordinate responses to emerging incidents. Others noted that it is often easier for companies to make the case internally for action and advocacy on shutdowns when they are able to point to institutional and government support for this issue through TFIS. It was also noted that, as demonstrated by ISOC and Access Now's reporting, shutdowns are increasing in frequency and technical complexity, and continue to be a timely issue against which coordination is needed.

Participants noted upcoming dates and events that may provide key moments for advocacy, engagement and coordination through TFIS. The 44th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was noted, taking place in November 2023, and it was suggested that TFIS could help the FOC to collect relevant information on the countries up for review and share it with the UPR working group, and/or could help coordinate input and recommendations on the UPR questions amongst FOC states and CSOs. Participants also mentioned the Sustainable Development Goals summit, taking place in September 2023, as well as the Summit for the Future in September 2024. Finally, 2024 was described as the "year of elections", with over 70 elections taking place around the world, including in countries that typically implement shutdowns during their electoral periods. Participants felt that TFIS could capitalise on these public moments in its advocacy, perhaps coordinating input from other groups and coalitions.

Promoting a Positive Vision for the Internet and Digital Technologies Through the Freedom Online Coalition | 9:00 - 10:00 CST, Wednesday, 7 June

Moderated By: **Scott Busby**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State

Opening Remarks: **Uzra Zeya**, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, United States

Panellists: **Nathalie Jaarsma**, Ambassador at-Large for Security Policy and Cyber, Kingdom of the Netherlands; **Mehwish Ansari**, Head of Digital, ARTICLE 19; **Xiao Qiang**, Founder and Editor-in-Chief, China Digital Times; **Sebastian Smart**, Regional Director, Chilean National Human Rights Institute

Uzra Zeya, US Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, provided opening remarks, noting the FOC's commitment to promote an "open, interoperable, secure, and reliable [Internet] governed by a



multistakeholder model”, recognising the evolving challenges to Internet freedom, and noting the work of the US as the 2023 Chair of the FOC in promoting a positive vision for the Internet.

Panellists discussed challenges to Internet freedom and explored both regional and country-specific case studies, including from the People’s Republic of China, the Netherlands, the European Union, and Latin America. Two key trends enabling the misuse of technology were noted: 1) the rhetoric around “tech solutionism” and the idea that security technology can address socio-economic and political issues; and 2) the notion of “function creep”, which recognises that technology can be used beyond its original purpose. Panellists reflected on the importance of transparency, especially around the development of AI, the use of a human rights-based framework in technology and policy evaluation, and the need to consider the contexts of the challenges to Internet freedom.

On the topic of how stakeholders can better engage on thematic and country-specific challenges to Internet freedom, panellists highlighted the following four areas of focus: 1) ensuring rights-respecting safeguards at the outset of technology development; 2) working collaboratively in a multistakeholder manner within the FOC to create coherent action and policy; 3) strengthening human rights-based approaches to digital technologies and conducting due diligence; and 4) leveraging collective action.

Strategies to Limit the Use of AI-Driven Technologies for Repressive and Authoritarian Purposes | 7:45 - 8:45 CST, Thursday, 8 June

Moderated By: **Zach Lampell**, Senior Legal Advisor, Freedom of Expression & Digital Rights, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

Panellists: **Joanna Bryson**, Professor, Hertie School of Governance; **Felix Kroll**, Deputy Head, Cyber Security and Cyber Foreign Policy, German Federal Foreign Office; **Nicole Manger**, Lead, Digital Cooperation & Technology Governance, German Federal Foreign Office; **Steven Feldstein**, Senior Fellow, Democracy and Governance, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; **Shabnam Mojtahedi**, Legal Advisor, Digital Rights, ICNL

The co-Chairs of the FOC Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TFAIR), Germany and ICNL, opened the session with an overview of the Task Force’s core areas of work, which include: hosting thematic deep dives with experts on AI ethics and governance; strengthening human rights language in emerging policy documents in relation to AI; and working collaboratively with civil society and academia to establish platforms that monitor misuses of AI with the aim of supporting efficient diplomatic action.

Panellists initially highlighted concerning trends in the misuse of AI-driven technologies, including large-scale government surveillance and tools such as Facial Recognition Technology, which are being deployed to track human rights defenders, stifle dissent, and restrict freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Panellists noted how such misuses of AI technologies contribute to a loss of privacy and shrinking of civic spaces, drawing attention to the use of deepfakes, which have the potential to spread misinformation, influence public opinion and undermine democratic processes. The pioneering of new surveillance techniques by authoritarian states was noted as an alarming trend, with panellists emphasising the need to explore safeguards that can be implemented by the international community, as well as normative pressures that can be applied to address these kinds of state-sponsored actions.

Information-sharing around litigation outcomes in cases addressing misuses of AI-driven technologies was noted as essential to support actors in collectively pushing back against the potential for authoritarian and repressive uses of such technologies. Panellists mentioned the need for accessible resources that break down technical language, and further engagement with affected communities. Panellists also noted that adhering and referring to existing frameworks and voluntary codes of ethics regarding AI is essential; however, their implementation remains a key area of concern, including the need for states to ensure resources are available to both identify and address human rights violations through AI-driven technologies.



The panel concluded that a UN Special Rapporteur focusing on Artificial Intelligence would be of significant benefit to increasing awareness of these challenges, and effectively communicating on the topic to help dispel misinformation about AI-driven technologies. In addition, it was noted that finding a technical solution to enable the labelling of AI-generated content is an ongoing conversation occurring amongst stakeholders and, if technically feasible, is an important step to addressing the potential misuse of AI-driven technologies.

Revisiting the Freedom Online Coalition’s Working Group on “An Internet Free and Secure” | 10:15 - 11:15 CST, Thursday, 8 June

Moderated By: **Chris Painter**, President, The Global Forum on Cyber Expertise Foundation

Panellists: **Scott Busby**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, United States Department of State; **Jason Pielemeier**, Executive Director, Global Network Initiative; **Adeboye Adegoke**, Senior Program Manager, Paradigm Initiative; **Tatiana Tropina**, Assistant Professor in Cybersecurity Governance at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs, Leiden University

This session revisited the Freedom Online Coalition’s Working Group “An Internet Free and Secure” (WG1), which was active from 2014 - 2017 and worked to bring a human rights framing to ongoing debates on cybersecurity. Scott Busby, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, provided opening remarks for the session, highlighting WG1’s pioneering work in the early days of the FOC’s activities. The Deputy Assistant Secretary noted how cybersecurity is intrinsic and essential to achieve the FOC’s mission, and emphasised how the Coalition is well positioned to reimagine cyberspace as a tool to achieve its objectives in conjunction with its values.

Panellists discussed the Working Group’s efforts to change the discourse around how cybersecurity is defined and the prevalent narrative of it being an issue exclusively of national security, emphasising the protection of individual human rights online, and specifically privacy, in ongoing discussions around cybersecurity and its many dimensions. The Working Group’s [definition of cybersecurity](#), in addition to its [recommendations for human rights based approaches to cybersecurity](#), were highlighted as setting an important benchmark in deepening understandings of how cybersecurity influences policies and frameworks in relation to the rights of individuals. In addition, WG1’s multi-stakeholder composition, featuring experts across multiple sectors, was underscored as a key enabler to the Working Group fulfilling its mandate, with stakeholders gaining a seat at the table through the FOC’s sub-entity to ensure human rights remained a key element of cybersecurity discussions.

In discussing how the Working Group’s outputs can continue to be utilised, panellists noted that new and emerging challenges relating to cybersecurity need to adhere to the fundamental benchmarks endorsed by FOC Member states, as noted in the Coalition’s underpinning documents and other outputs. The need for new cybersecurity policies to be assessed in relation to potential harm to human rights, and whether they adhere to existing principles, was further emphasised. To ensure cybersecurity policy-making prioritises promoting and respecting human rights, panellists noted opportunities for Coalition Member states to integrate WG1’s recommendations into the development of cybersecurity strategies, increase engagement in regional organisations, coordinate in multilateral processes and spaces, as well as explore how this may translate to national processes.

