

Freedom Online Coalition

Strategy & Coordination Meeting, November 2023

14 - 15 November | Geneva, Switzerland



FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting - Report

14-15 November, 2023 | Geneva, Switzerland

The third FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) in 2023 took place on 14-15 November in Geneva, Switzerland, preceded by an FOC Steering Committee meeting on 13 November. The SCM included in-person and virtual participation from 29 FOC Members, 1 Observer, and 19 FOC Advisory Network Members.

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Session Summaries¹

Day 0, Monday 13 November

Steering Committee Meeting

16:00 - 17:30 CET

Participants: Steering Committee / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

Ahead of the broader Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM), Steering Committee (SC) Members gathered to continue discussions around the development of a FOC Global Digital Compact (GDC) Paper, as well as the potential for FOC coordination with other multilateral and multistakeholder bodies and processes. Recalling Members' interest in developing a position paper on the GDC expressed in previous meetings, Members proceeded to discuss next steps, noting overall agreement to continue developing a GDC Paper that includes talking points based on existing FOC and UN language, with further discussions to take place on Day 1 of the SCM during the Joint Roundtable. SC Members went on to discuss FOC engagement in multilateral and multistakeholder initiatives, highlighting that many FOC Members are also members of other initiatives and fora related to digital technologies, and discussed challenges and opportunities for strengthening coordination.

Action>> The SU to develop a suggested outline for engaging with multistakeholder initiatives, as well as requirements for funding this activity.

Day 1, Tuesday 14 November

FOC Member Meeting

9:30 - 11:00 CET

Participants: FOC / Geneva Diplomatic Network / Observers / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

Ambassador Simon Geissbühler, Head of the Human Security Division at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, provided welcome remarks, followed by opening remarks by Ambassador Michèle Taylor, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council, and Ambassador Bathsheba Nell Crocker, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva. Elonnai Hickok and Tatiana Tropina, co-Chairs of the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) concluded the welcome with their remarks.

The Support Unit (SU) shared housekeeping updates, highlighting the Coalition's growth by three new Members and one Observer in 2023, flagging that expressions of interest to serve on the FOC SC in 2024 will open soon, and noting internal updates on FOC finances and communications. The SU also updated Members on the progress of implementing the Program of Action (PoA) 2023 through the FOC's working methods, highlighting activities undertaken this year around information and knowledge-sharing, diplomatic coordination, and advocacy, as well as the work of the FOC-AN. Members further discussed takeaways from the 2023 Chairship and FOC sub-entities, identifying challenges, opportunities, and suggestions for the 2024 Chairship. Members also heard a presentation from the Open Government Partnership, which shared information about their work and suggested opportunities for synergies with the FOC.

Action>> Members are invited to provide feedback on the operations of the Support Unit and identify strengths and areas for improvement by completing the [SU Survey](#).

¹ Please refer to [Annex 2](#) for the minutes of the SC and FOC Member meetings.



FOC Advisory Network Meeting 09:30 - 11:00 CET

Participants: FOC-AN / Support Unit
Format: Hybrid

FOC-AN Members met and coordinated ahead of the Joint Roundtable, discussing the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the GDC, and the broader Internet governance landscape, as well as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Under the first agenda item, Chengetai Masengo and Anja Gengo from the UN Secretariat joined the meeting to discuss next year's IGF to be held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the future of the IGF in light of the concerns raised by different stakeholders and the upcoming multilateral processes related to the governance of digital technologies. FOC-AN Members agreed to put together a joint submission to take stock of IGF 2023 and recommend improvements for IGF 2024 through the [open call](#) issued by the IGF Secretariat.

The FOC-AN moved on to discuss the GDC and Members considered what the FOC-AN can do to support FOC governments engaging in the process. Noting the GDC as a process that provides a framework to discuss Internet governance and multistakeholder participation under a microscope and potentially undermine existing commitments to the multistakeholder approach, Members underscored the importance of reflecting on lessons learned, as well as considering how to create a bridge between the GDC and the World Summit on the Information Society Review Process (WSIS+20). Members flagged concerns around the unclear modalities for stakeholder participation in the GDC and Summit of the Future, and emphasised that direction from FOC governments would be useful to support their engagement in the process.

Finally, the FOC-AN discussed the Israel-Palestine conflict, noting appetite for developing Proactive Advice on the topic, and agreeing to take this forward and discuss whether the document should be conflict-specific, or future-proofed to be applicable for other situations. Members also noted the possibility of developing a position paper that outlines the increasing intersection between international human rights law and humanitarian law, and the importance of conducting more research on this theme in the global context.

FOC Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online Workshop 11:30 - 12:30 CET

Participants: FOC / Geneva Diplomatic Network / Observers / FOC-AN / Support Unit
Format: Hybrid

The session was organised by the Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online (TFTIO), and aimed to workshop a draft of specific and actionable policy recommendations to advance trust in digital information ecosystems. The draft document was initially launched during the 2023 IGF in Kyoto, Japan and builds on the work and insights [WITNESS](#) gained from workshops conducted in African countries on priorities related to artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and large language models. Participants were divided into groups and discussed the unique value of the FOC in conversations around trust and online information, as well as suggestions for how the document can be strengthened and build greater coherence with existing FOC outputs.

Feedback received from the participants included recommendations related to clarifying terminology, considering equipment and infrastructure beyond broadband and its impact on equitable access, and incorporating regulation parameters around government and private sector partnerships. Participants also reflected on issues of privacy and noted "consent" emerged as a central issue, with governments grappling to strike a balance between protecting rights and freedoms and avoiding unnecessary tracking. Encryption surfaced as a contentious point, with efforts noted to undermine it, raising concerns about forceful consent and potential limitations on sharing and receiving information. The collaborative session concluded with a debrief of the group discussions and with a commitment from TFTIO to bring the ideas and suggestions forward as they continue to develop the recommendations.



Program of Action 2024

12:30 - 13:30 CET

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

Format: Hybrid

The Netherlands, incoming FOC Chair for 2024, opened the session by introducing the draft PoA 2024, highlighting the GDC as a core focus, and noting priority areas of the Dutch Chairship, including strengthening the multistakeholder model for Internet governance, shaping artificial intelligence (AI) governance, combatting human rights abuses online, and advancing digital inclusion. The FOC and FOC-AN discussed the first draft of the PoA 2024 and provided suggestions about how to strengthen the document.

FOC-AN Members provided suggestions for strengthening references to the importance of protecting the global and interoperable nature of the Internet as distinct from addressing threats to human rights occurring at the content layer, as well as the need for including meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the POA with explicit reference to the role of civil society and the FOC-AN. FOC Members provided further suggestions related to language and structure, including introducing a clear distinction between governance and policy goals. FOC and FOC-AN Members further suggested clarifying the role of the sub-entities and how they tie into the FOC's work, as well as to include reference to engagement with strategic partners beyond the European Union, and exploring leveraging additional channels to strengthen FOC diplomatic coordination and FOC presence outside the global North. FOC Members highlighted the importance of streamlining FOC activities and focusing on processes that have the greatest potential for the FOC to add value and produce tangible outcomes. In regards to FOC expansion and outreach, it was noted that this should be in service of achieving the FOC mission and not an aim in itself.

Geneva Diplomatic Network Meeting

12:30 - 13:30 CET

Participants: Geneva Diplomatic Network / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

The Netherlands presented the draft FOC Program of Action 2024 and draft Work Plan for the Geneva diplomatic network. The activities set out in the diplomatic network work plans aim to raise awareness of the FOC among its missions and the broader UN and multistakeholder community, as well as enable more strategic coordination between FOC Member States by identifying key opportunities where the FOC can contribute to the discussions taking place in local diplomatic ecosystems. In the case of the Geneva diplomatic network, the Netherlands highlighted the importance of strategising around freedom online and governance of the Internet and digital technologies from a cross-sectoral perspective, which includes considering human rights, cyber, and digital issues holistically. The Netherlands emphasised engagement in the WSIS+20 as a crucial process of focus.

The US reflected on their 2023 FOC Chairship and leadership of the Geneva network, highlighting the various opportunities to leverage in terms of coordination beyond just the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). The US noted the necessity for collaboration across capital and all FOC networks (Geneva, New York, and Paris) on topics related to human rights, digital, cyber, and disarmament, highlighting the FOC's utility for information and knowledge-sharing.

Regarding the FOC's HRC engagement, Geneva representatives agreed on prioritising information exchange and awareness raising ahead of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in 2024 on topics related to the FOC's mandate. Members further noted the utility of holding pre-HRC coordination meetings and briefings, emphasising that identifying the right timing for these is key. Members suggested exploring how the FOC could be utilised to leverage relevant human rights language from the HRC in other fora and processes that aim to shape common positions on issues related to digital technologies.

Members also noted the value add of engaging with the wider UN membership, multistakeholder, and tech community, and nurturing a cross-sectoral approach through the FOC in Geneva, including coordination and knowledge sharing around other fora and processes in addition to the HRC (e.g. WSIS+20, International Telecommunications Union). Considering side events sometimes have limited impact, Members suggested being more targeted with activities, such as concise breakfast/lunch briefings, and highlighted the importance of reaching the ambassador-level, not just working-level and experts.



Action>> FOC Geneva diplomatic network representatives are asked to provide written feedback to the Netherlands on the 2024 Work Plan by **Monday, 4 December**.

FOC and FOC-AN Joint Roundtable: FOC Engagement in the GDC

14:30 - 16:15 CET

Participants: FOC/ Geneva Diplomatic Network / Observers/ FOC-AN / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

The Joint Roundtable focused on discussions around the Global Digital Compact (GDC) process and what the FOC can do to prepare ahead of negotiations in 2024. Sweden, GDC co-facilitator alongside Zambia, opened the session by providing an overview of the process, noting that the GDC negotiations, which are likely to face a delayed kick off, are a critical step in preparing for the Summit of the Future. Sweden further highlighted that the informal consultations conducted in Spring 2023 provided governments and the multistakeholder community the chance to spotlight challenges and opportunities around digital transformation, and noted that the assessment of the consultation can be found in the [GDC Issues Paper](#).

The FOC-AN followed by reiterating key points from their [Proactive Advice](#) on the GDC process introduced in September 2023, and their ongoing concerns. They highlighted the importance of considering the GDC process in the context of wider Internet governance discussions in the lead up to WSIS+20 Review in 2025, which is likely to be influenced by the outcomes of the GDC and the Summit of the Future. It was emphasised that a number of countries see these processes as an opportunity to challenge the current Internet governance model and undermine the open and interoperable nature of the Internet and the multistakeholder approach that underpins it. The FOC-AN noted specific concerns around efforts to fragment the Internet's technical layer, which serves as a prerequisite for the exercise of human rights in the digital age, and encouraged the FOC to engage and help shape the outcomes of these discussions.

Following the presentations, the SU introduced the suggested approach for FOC engagement as agreed by the SC on Day 0. Members discussed the approach, including the development of a GDC Paper with key messages and talking points as resources to support Member States in negotiations. These draft resources were shared with Members during the discussion. Members reflected on the substance and provided suggestions for strengthening the documents.

Overall, there was support for the categories for the Paper, with a suggestion to consider distinguishing between policy areas that the FOC could reinforce vs. areas where a more defensive approach by the FOC might need to be deployed. As part of this process, the FOC should explore ways in which its approach and goals intersect with the interests of the G77. Specific recommendations included underscoring the importance of committing to the technical interoperability and multistakeholder governance of the Internet, recognising that government efforts can at times exacerbate fragmentation. It was also suggested to consider strengthening the documents by cross-referencing existing UN and FOC language with GDC text, once available. The FOC-AN encouraged Member States to consider including civil society in their delegations, noting concerns about limited civil society engagement in the GDC and broader Summit of the Future processes. The FOC could similarly consider leveraging its existing mechanisms and expertise to support Members' engagement, including through its task forces and the FOC-AN.

FOC Members agreed with plans to further develop internal resources, noting that they would be helpful to facilitate interagency coordination, as well as identify thematic gaps where the FOC has not yet developed language on relevant issues.

Action>> The US to incorporate input from the Joint Roundtable meeting into the GDC Paper and follow-up with the FOC on next steps.

Day 2, Wednesday 15 November

Interactive Workshop on Generative AI

9:00 - 13:35 CET

Participants: FOC / Geneva Diplomatic Network / Observers / FOC-AN / External Invitees / Support Unit



Format: Hybrid

The [Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights \(TFAIR\)](#) organised a [hands-on workshop](#) that sought to enhance participant's literacy on responsible AI and develop their skills to conduct effective and critical dialogue with relevant experts. The workshop was facilitated by [Dialecto](#) and consisted of two interactive, hands-on sessions where participants engaged in teamwork, designing and analysing AI systems, and discussing real-world scenarios in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between AI design choices and their ethical and legal implications. The two sessions provided participants the opportunity to practise balancing trade-offs in the design of AI systems, as well as deploying AI applications with foundation models and Generative AI. Following each activity, participants returned to plenary and discussed takeaways.

Reflecting on Trends, Challenges and Opportunities to Protect and Promote Human Rights Online through the FOC

14:35 - 15:30 CET

Participants: FOC / Geneva Diplomatic Network / Observers / FOC-AN / External Invitees / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

The session opened with the Chairs of the FOC sub-entities sharing reflections from their perspectives on the trends, challenges, and opportunities for FOC engagement. Co-Chairs noted a number of areas for FOC attention including Internet shutdowns and restrictions in the context of elections, information integrity, and Generative AI. The sub-entity Chairs further flagged the following challenges to FOC's efforts to protect and promote human rights, including the Coalition's ability to respond quickly in crisis situations, diversifying the FOC's Membership, limitations around Members' resource capacity, and the cross-cutting nature of policy areas like AI and Internet shutdowns with other issues and the difficulty of coordinating around a specific topic. Co-Chairs shared a number of suggestions to improve the FOC's engagement including having multiple government co-Chairs for sub-entities in order to better manage the workload, continuing efforts to mainstream digital inclusion in the work of the Coalition, and engaging in the GDC and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) processes.

Following interventions from the sub-entity co-Chairs, FOC-AN Members emphasised the role of the FOC sub-entities as spaces to advance a diversity of multistakeholder perspectives, and highlighted opportunities for the sub-entities to activate external stakeholders on relevant policy areas, suggesting Members leverage the expertise of the sub-entity external consultee networks more often. Regarding the GDC, FOC-AN Members suggested using the sub-entities to support coordination around the process, as well as highlighting the success of the FOC-AN's Proactive Advice and encouraging FOC Members to think strategically about how the FOC-AN can continue contributing not only to the GDC, but to WSIS+20 and the IGF discussions. Recognising the resource demands of leading and engaging in sub-entities, the US emphasised the importance of ensuring that sub-entity activities align with the PoA to enable effective allocation of Member resources.

Joint Session by GESDA and OHCHR B-Tech Project

15:30 - 16:30 CET

Participants: FOC / Geneva Diplomatic Network / Observers / FOC-AN / External Invitees / Support Unit

Format: Hybrid

The [Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator \(GESDA\)](#) and the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\) B-Tech Project](#) followed with a joint session focused on future development of AI and B-Tech's Generative AI project. GESDA's presentation introduced key developments in AI that they foresee as relevant to the FOC and human rights including: deeper machine learning, multimodal AI, intelligent devices, and exogenous cognition. The OHCHR B-Tech Project further highlighted how the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) can be leveraged to develop and govern Generative AI by providing guidance for responsible business conduct around AI, and clarifying the State's duty to foster rights-respecting development, deployment, and use of Generative AI.



Annex 1: Agenda (abridged)

Day 0, Monday, 13 November

| Time (CET) | Topic | Attendance |
|------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 16.00 | Steering Committee Meeting | Steering Committee; Support Unit |

Day 1, Tuesday, 14 November

| Time (CST) | Topic | Attendance |
|------------|---|---|
| 9.00 | Welcome & Opening Remarks | All attendees |
| 9.30 | FOC Members Meeting | FOC Members; Geneva Diplomatic Network; Observers; Support Unit |
| | FOC Advisory Network Meeting | FOC-AN; Support Unit |
| 11.00 | Coffee Break (30 minutes) | All |
| 11.30 | FOC Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online Workshop | All |
| 12.30 | Program of Action 2024 Discussion | FOC Members; FOC-AN; Support Unit |
| | Geneva Diplomatic Network Meeting | Geneva Diplomatic Network; Support Unit |
| 13.30 | Lunch Break (1 hour) | All |
| 14.30 | FOC & FOC Advisory Network Joint-Roundtable | All |
| 16.15 | Plenary & Closing Remarks | All |
| 16.30 | End of Day | |

Day 2, Wednesday, 15 November

| Time (CST) | Topic | Attendance |
|------------|---|------------|
| 9.00 | Interactive Workshop on Generative AI organised by the FOC Task Force on AI and Human Rights (TFAIR) | All |
| 13.35 | Lunch Break (1 hour) | All |
| 14.35 | Reflecting on Trends, Challenges and Opportunities to Protect and Promote Human Rights Online through the FOC | All |
| 15.30 | Joint Session by GESDA and OHCHR B-Tech Project | All |
| 16.30 | End of Day | |



Annex 2: Minutes

Steering Committee Meeting

Monday, 13 November | 16:00 - 17:30

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

Housekeeping

- The Support Unit (SU) noted this is the third and final Strategy and Coordination Meeting of the US Chairship in 2023, and thanked Switzerland for hosting the two-day event.
- An overview of the SCM agenda was provided, noting minor changes to the session schedule.
- The SU noted that further FOC housekeeping updates will be shared on Day 1 of the SCM, but flagging the following key updates:
 - Internal Program of Action (PoA) 2023
 - The SU circulated a survey to request feedback on operations and to identify strengths and areas for improvement, in line with the SU's mandate as reflected in the Internal PoA 2023.
 - Feedback from this survey will feed into the draft Internal PoA 2024, for which the SU will be coordinating with the Netherlands to ensure the PoAs are aligned. The Internal PoA will be circulated to the SC for sign-off.
 - Steering Committee Expressions of Interest
 - Calls for expressions of interest to serve on the SC in 2024 will be shared soon. *[Please note that calls for expressions of interest have now been shared, and the deadline to express interest is Friday, 8 December.]*
 - The US noted the importance of greater global South representation in the SC and suggested Members engage bilaterally and encourage states to join the SC.
 - Chairship 2025
 - The SU has received one formal bid for chairing the Coalition in 2025 from Estonia.
 - The next steps include sharing Estonia's bid with the wider FOC for objections. Should no objections be received during the silence procedure, Estonia will be confirmed as the FOC Chair in 2025 via email before the end of the year *[Please note that the bid was shared, with silence ending on Wednesday, 6 December]*.
 - Sub-Entities
 - The procedure for the SC to renew the mandates of sub-entities has begun, with the co-Chairs asked to submit an expression of interest to continue leading the Task Force or Working Group, as well as submit a mandate extension request which includes a convincing argument to continue operations after the initial diplomatic goal is achieved, and/or if the calendar year is expiring.
 - The SU noted the possibility of sub-entity mandates not being extended if there are any sub-entities without a lead.
 - Next steps will be discussed on Day 1 of the SCM during the FOC Member Only Meeting.

Discussion Items

Draft FOC Global Digital Compact (GDC) Paper

- The SU provided background on the development of the Zero Draft of the GDC Paper, noting the GDC has been highlighted as a priority of the FOC.
- During the SC Meeting in Tallinn, Estonia on 4 September, the SC expressed interest in developing an internal FOC position paper on the process, with the goal of securing agreement among Members about priority areas and language.
 - The GDC Paper was shared with the full Membership ahead of the Geneva SCM, and will be the basis for discussion during the Joint Roundtable Meeting.



- The paper outlines overarching messages to be leveraged by FOC Member States in GDC negotiations, based on existing FOC language as stated in foundational documents, relevant joint statements, and other outputs.
- The messages are cross-cutting and intended to provide Member States the means to achieve alignment on policy priority areas across the GDC outcome document.
- The SU noted it is developing a document with in-depth talking points on GDC-relevant policy areas, which seeks to identify existing UN language, in addition to FOC language..
 - The development of talking points is an opportunity for the FOC to align definitions and language ahead of relevant fora like the GDC and WSIS+20.
- The US inquired whether SC Members support this direction, and if Members think it is realistic and useful.
 - Denmark and Germany noted that talking points would be helpful to facilitate coordination internally.
 - The Netherlands noted the exercise would be helpful to find common ground among FOC Members ahead of relevant fora.
 - Estonia and Finland agreed with the development of talking points, noting they would be helpful, especially for smaller countries with limited resources.
 - Estonia inquired about how the GDC Paper takes into account the [FOC-AN Proactive Advice on the GDC Process](#).
 - Canada suggested developing talking points that go beyond a human rights focus and to think more strategically about what the FOC seeks to influence in the broader multilateral system.
 - The UK noted the advantage of developing a baseline of talking points, highlighting difficulties in negotiations and how such a paper could help consolidate positions.
 - Switzerland noted the talking points are an opportunity to reiterate the FOC language.
- The US noted that the structure of the talking points being developed is largely based on the UN Secretary General's GDC [Policy Brief](#).
 - The UK inquired about the timeline for development of the paper, noting that even though the zero draft of the GDC Paper is agreed upon FOC language, the framing is slightly different and suggested building in time for Members to review internally.
 - Denmark and the Netherlands agreed, noting they will need time to ensure internal buy-in.
 - The SU noted that since the documents will not be public there is flexibility around how they are developed.
- Canada noted the GDC is only one element of the broader Summit for the Future process, highlighting that the Pact for the Future will include issues related to cyber, digital, and technology, and encouraging Members to make sure all relevant processes are on the FOC's radar.
 - The US suggested including key messaging and talking points relevant to the Pact for the Future.
- The US noted the need to come to an agreement on what existing UN language the FOC should cite, and that the FOC justification for using particular UN language is important to share with GDC negotiators in New York.
 - The Netherlands agreed with an approach that focuses on the UN language, and suggested the GDC Paper include specific reference to the AI governance track and the UN High Level Advisory Body on AI, as well as look into ways the FOC can align with existing processes and initiatives.
- The US provided an overview of the expectations for the Joint Roundtable discussion with the FOC-AN on Day 1 of the SCM.
 - The SU noted two questions that will be raised to governments:
 - Is the FOC the right place to negotiate language ahead of the GDC?
 - Is the development of a GDC Paper with key messages and talking points the right approach?
 - Members agreed to share the draft FOC/UN talking points on the screen with the FOC-AN during the Joint Roundtable Meeting.

FOC coordination with multilateral and multistakeholder initiatives

- The SU provided background, noting there are multiple multistakeholder and multilateral initiatives that are beginning to expand in their scope and incorporate a focus on the promotion and protection of human rights online and in the context of governance of digital technologies.
 - The discussion aimed to explore opportunities for the FOC to enhance coordination with these initiatives, and ensure the FOC remains a visible platform to advance these efforts.



- The US noted that even though FOC Members are also members of other initiatives, the representatives are different, and further raised the question to SC Members about whether there is a role for the FOC to facilitate greater synergies with relevant initiatives.
 - Estonia noted that while the FOC is the most developed forum for digital technology governance discussions, it is also a relevant topic that many organisations will want to work on, and it is important to think about how to refrain from duplicating efforts, especially for small states with limited resources.
 - The Netherlands suggested using the FOC and its communication channels as a way to share information about what activities Member states are engaging in.
 - Germany suggested Members share FOC updates internally.
 - The Netherlands and Switzerland noted the challenge of socialising FOC language internally where there is competing language focused on different policy priorities.
 - The UK suggested taking a proactive approach to synchronising with relevant initiatives by offering briefings to organisations and initiatives about actions they can take.
- The SU noted that in an effort to address some of these challenges, it is currently coordinating directly with the Media Freedom Coalition Secretariat through regular check-in meetings.
 - The potential to establish a broader secretariat coordination mechanism across multiple initiatives was noted, and the SU highlighted that this approach could be a more natural path to engage with multilateral organisations like the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
 - The US highlighted the importance of considering the impact on SU resourcing if efforts to coordinate engagement of different secretariats is pursued, and suggested developing greater clarity around what is envisioned for this kind of engagement.

Action>> The SU to develop a suggested outline for engaging with multistakeholder initiatives, as well as requirements for funding this activity.

FOC Members Meeting

Tuesday, 14 November | 9:30 - 11:00

Attended

Members: US (Chair 2023); Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Maldives, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and UK

Observers: Taiwan

FOC-AN: Adeboye Adegoke, Fiona Alexander, Jennifer Brody, Veronica Ferrari, Alexandra Funk, Dinah Van der Geest, Helen Harris, Elonnai Hickok, Victor Kapiyo, Mallory Knodel, Zachery Lampell, Juan Carlos Lara, Laura O'Brien, Jason Pielemeier, Michael Samway, Matthew Shears, Sebastian Smart, Tatiana Tropina, Alexandra Walden

Welcome Remarks

- Ambassador Simon Geissbühler, Head of the Human Security Division at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, provided welcome remarks, emphasising the importance of a free, open, and secure Internet for all, and highlighting that restrictions on Internet and communications can have serious consequences on human rights.
- Ambassador Bathsheba Nell Crocker, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva provided opening remarks, noting the FOC's responsibility to advocate for Internet freedom and push back against Internet fragmentation, highlighting the US's efforts to address the risks associated with digital technologies under their Chairship.
- Ambassador Michèle Taylor, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council provided opening remarks, reflecting on the activities and accomplishments of the FOC under the US Chairship and highlighting the US' efforts to reinvigorate the Coalition in line with their Summit for Democracy commitments.
- Elonnai Hickok and Tatiana Tropina, co-Chairs of the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) concluded opening remarks by highlighting challenges and trends in the digital landscape, especially calling attention to the growing shift from the multistakeholder model of Internet governance toward one that is



multilateral, and underlining the importance of the FOC in reaffirming commitments to upholding the multistakeholder approach.

Housekeeping

- The SU provided updates on upcoming events and implementation of the Internal PoA 2023:
 - Upcoming Events
 - 18 - 19 December, Berlin: Task Force on AI and Human Rights AI Workshop
 - Internal PoA Implementation
 - FOC Finance
 - The SU thanked Australia, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the US for their financial commitments in 2023 to support the work of the FOC.
 - The SU recognised the governments of Australia, Canada and the Netherlands who have confirmed funds for 2024 and noted they are working with other FOC governments, including Estonia, Ireland and Finland to negotiate FOC funding for 2024.
 - In 2024, taking into account the confirmed funds, the FOC will be at a £490,000 (EUR 550,000) shortfall until the end of the year.
 - The shortfall relates to staff and communication costs, as well as to ensuring that the FOC is able to bring global South FOC Member representatives and civil society organisations, including from the global South countries, to FOC in-person meetings and events.
 - The US noted the SU Survey that will be shared at the end of the meeting and encouraged Members to take into account resource costs when providing feedback.
 - Austria inquired about what limitations the budget shortfall places on FOC activities.
 - If Members are able to make contributions, please reach out to the SU (zora@gp-digital.org).
 - FOC Communications
 - The SU noted they continue to explore further developments to the Digital Hub to ensure it is a well-utilised internal communications tool for FOC Member States, and welcomed feedback from Members on methods to improve internal communications within the Coalition.
 - Efforts to operationalise the FOC Terms of Reference (ToR) on the Coalition's external communications channels are underway and the FOC ToR is available to view [online](#).

Discussion

Chairship 2023

- The SU provided an overview on the progress on implementing the PoA 2023, highlighting FOC activities that have taken place according to its working methods (information and knowledge-sharing, diplomatic coordination, and advocacy, and the FOC-AN).
- The US reflected on the progress updates and noted the crucial role that the FOC can play in fora like the UN, to facilitate information sharing, as well as coordination among governments.
- Denmark, Ghana, Canada, and the Netherlands highlighted the high volume of FOC activities in 2023 and noted that too many activities can be a challenge to ensuring meaningful engagement from Members.
 - Ghana and Austria flagged the limited capacity of smaller states and suggested the FOC focus efforts on activities that have the greatest potential to produce tangible outcomes and provide added value.
- The Netherlands recognised the US and SU for the successful coordination of multistakeholder discussions during RightsCon and the Global Internet Governance Forum (IGF).
- Canada highlighted that a challenge for the diplomatic networks is a lack of visibility around FOC activities.
 - Denmark suggested considering how the FOC can strengthen communication channels with diplomatic networks, recommending the FOC bring them into discussions and leverage their expertise.



- Switzerland highlighted the importance of maximising the potential of the FOC to put human rights at the centre of discussions without overstressing itself, and suggested discussing strategic allocation of resources.
- Austria noted from the perspective of the Geneva diplomatic network that given the diversity of the FOC Membership, it is difficult to have Coalition Members rally around a specific cause in fora like the UN HRC, and inquired about what the FOC can do beyond information sharing.
- Austria noted of the diplomatic networks that it is difficult to follow the FOC's initiatives, and suggested giving diplomatic networks time to determine whether to engage in initiatives.
- The US noted the high volume of FOC activities in 2023 was an effort to increase the visibility of the FOC, flagging pressure from FOC Member states' senior leadership to showcase the value-add of the FOC.

FOC Sub-Entities

- The SU noted the process for sub-entity mandate renewals has begun, and that Members have the opportunity to discuss how mandate renewals should be evaluated and whether any changes need to be made to the process.
 - As outlined in the FOC Terms of Reference (IV.f), the mandate for each sub-entity will be affirmatively approved by the SC via a silence procedure process, operate for one calendar year, and must include at least one concrete and actionable diplomatic goal.
 - The FOC currently has four active Task Forces and one Working Group that address specific thematic priorities of the Coalition.
- The US suggested opening sub-entity leadership opportunities to all Members of the FOC.
- The SU noted that historically the purpose of sub-entity leads was to support the FOC Chair in the delivery of activities identified in the PoA.
 - Daily support to the sub-entities is provided by the SU and impacts SU resourcing for other FOC activities.
- Denmark highlighted earlier points about Members' limited capacity to engage in FOC activities and advised against continuing to extend sub-entity mandates that do not have clear goals, and suggested thinking about different ways to use the sub-entities optimally.
- Estonia suggested thinking about whether the sub-entities can be used to reduce some of the workload of the FOC.
 - The Netherlands noted the potential of linking sub-entities to specific UN bodies or fora.
- Canada inquired whether the Netherlands plans to include sub-entities in the PoA 2024.
 - The Netherlands noted the development of the PoA 2024 will be a collective effort and inclusion of sub-entities will be based on Member capacity.
 - Ghana suggested evaluating mandate extensions based on the priorities of the year's PoA, noting the additional work that leading a sub-entity entails and suggested inviting multiple FOC governments to co-lead them.
 - Given the additional workload of leading a sub-entity, Ghana noted that it is uncertain whether they will be able to continue leading the Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE) without the support of another government co-chair.
- Canada noted they will no longer be in a position to Chair the Silicon Valley Working Group (SVWG), and inquired about what will happen to sub-entities if there is no lead.
- The US noted challenges around the launch of sub-entity activities in 2023 and encouraged Members to share their capacity for sub-entity engagement in 2024 with the Netherlands, incoming FOC Chair.

Open Government Partnership (OGP) Presentation

- In an effort to coordinate and connect with other multistakeholder initiatives in the field, the OGP gave a presentation to FOC Members on their approach to digital governance and civic space, and the potential value of more closely aligning FOC strategies and advocacy with OGP's multistakeholder process and action plans.
 - The OGP highlighted three ways in which they are interested in working together with the FOC:
 - Exploring synergies and collaborating to ensure that the governance of digital technology is underpinned by human rights;
 - Developing measures to mark progress on government activities and performance related to digital governance;
 - Translating the norms and principles agreed through the FOC into country-level action and measurable reforms through the OGP's approach of multistakeholder action plans.



SU Survey

- Following the OGP presentation, the SU circulated a survey to request feedback on its operations and to identify strengths and areas for improvement, in line with the SU's mandate as reflected in the Internal PoA 2023.
 - The SU left the meeting room during this time.

