

# Steering Committee Meeting #8

Wednesday, 27 September 2023

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

## Housekeeping

- The Support Unit (SU) noted the FOC Ministerial Meeting held on the margins of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, which featured a roundtable discussion with government representatives from the FOC, members of the Group of 77, in addition to remarks from the International Telecommunications Union, and civil society and private sector representatives from the FOC Advisory Network.
  - A summary of the event, including links to other communications outputs and photos from the meeting, can be found on the [FOC website](#).
  - The US thanked Members for their engagement in the event, and welcomed Members to provide feedback to help inform future high-level meetings.
- The SU provided an overview of processes and activities, as well as upcoming deadlines and events, including:
  - Processes and activities:
    - FOC-AN led a virtual briefing on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) process;
    - The Zero Draft of the 2024 Program of Action (PoA) has been shared with the FOC-AN for advice.
    - The Joint Statement on the Heightened Risks Associated with Surveillance Technologies and the Importance of Safeguards in the Use of These Tools successfully passed silence procedure, and will be delivered during the UN HRC54 on 5 October;
    - The Rapid Response Toolkit has been drafted and shared with the Steering Committee (SC), and will be shared with the rest of the Coalition shortly.
  - Deadlines:
    - **COB Wednesday, 27 September:** Deadline for SC sign-off on the Final Draft of the Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections. *[Please note this deadline has passed]*
    - **COB Monday 2 October:** Deadline to register for the Geneva Strategy and Coordination Meeting.
    - **COB Wednesday 4 October:** Deadline for FOC-sign-off on the Final Draft of the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age.
      - The Donor principles are intended to be launched during the 2023 Internet Governance Forum (IGF).
    - **COB Wednesday 4 October:** End of silence procedure on the Final Draft of the Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections.
  - Events:
    - [Global Conference for the Celebration of the International Day for the Universal Access to Information](#) | Thursday, 28 September | Oxford, UK *[Please note this event has passed]*.
      - The UK will be taking part in a panel session on behalf of TFIS. The theme of the event is “The Importance of the Online Space for Access to Information”, with the panel session focusing on “Technology for Democracy and Development.”
    - [IGF 2023](#) | 8 - 12 October | Kyoto, Japan
      - The FOC is facilitating the following sessions:

- 10 October: “Elections and the Internet: free, fair and open?” (09:45 - 10:45) (Task Force on Internet Shutdowns)
- 11 October: “Donor Principles for the Digital Age: Turning Principles into Action” (08:30 - 10:00) (Funding Coordination Group)
- 12 October: “Leveraging the FOC at International Organizations” (08:30 - 09:30) (FOC Open Forum)" - US
- *[Note: Following the meeting an email was sent to Members asking them to notify the SU of their in-person attendance plans to help coordinate informal and bilat meetings. Should Members be attending the IGF in-person, please email the SU.]*
- **FOC SCM in Geneva** | 14 - 15 November | Geneva, Switzerland
  - The 3rd Strategy & Coordination Meeting of 2023 will convene all FOC Member States, Observers, and the FOC Advisory Network in Geneva, Switzerland from 14-15 November.
    - Please keep in mind that the US is still considering holding a Day 0 SC meeting on Monday, 13 November.

## Discussion Items

### **Development of a Global Digital Compact FOC position paper**

- The SU noted the SC expressed interest in developing an internal FOC position paper on the GDC during the previous SC meeting on 4 September in Tallinn, which would outline potential debates around human rights language, and aim to secure agreement among Members about priority areas and language.
  - The US noted the position paper would also look to support diplomats in New York who will be negotiating the GDC by providing clear and agreed-upon human rights language and positions that they can use in discussions to strengthen their positions.
- The US noted two aspects to the position paper:
  - Identifying human rights topics and language that the FOC as a group of like-minded governments want to ensure are reinforced in the GDC; and
  - Recognising the potential for like-minded governments to disagree when it comes to smaller nuances, which can detract from having a united overall position in relevant fora.
- The US noted they have begun discussing and drafting the position paper with other Members and their experts working on the HRC and GDC, highlighting these interactions as helpful, and will share the document with the SC for review once a first draft has been developed.
- The Netherlands, Canada, UK, and Denmark expressed support for moving the position paper forward, with the UK and Denmark noting the need to consult internally with other relevant governmental departments/agencies during its drafting, which may lengthen the process.
  - Denmark inquired whether the position paper would include terms of engagement, and if so, would they address all aspects of the GDC or have a specific focus.
  - The US noted the position paper will include both terms of engagement and language referring to previous consensus resolutions, and intends to address the human rights component of the GDC rather than respond to its entirety.
    - Denmark noted the importance of clarifying what Members will be expected to commit to and where there is flexibility in the document.
- The US noted the FOC is an ideal space to coordinate collectively on these issues before going into multilateral fora, and highlighted the position paper as a potential model of how to come together as a Coalition and coordinate ahead of multilateral convenings.

- The Netherlands suggested in addition to developing the position paper, engaging with the Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE) to develop a common understanding of the problem and outline the rationale for the GDC process.
  - The US noted that Ghana is the Chair of TFDE and a number of the SC are also Members of the Task Force, noting they anticipate a digital inclusion perspective will organically be incorporated into the drafting of the position paper.

**Action>>** The US to share a first draft of the Global Digital Compact position paper with the Steering Committee after the 2023 Internet Governance Forum.

### Next Steps for the AI Pledge

*[Please note that after the meeting, the U.S. shared the following written update regarding the timeline for the intended FOC Pledge on AI: "After helpful comments during the Steering Committee call and upon further reflection, we are aiming to extend the timeline for which we will develop and issue such a pledge and will look to early 2024 for a dissemination date. In that vein, we hope to circulate a first draft for this group's review and input soon. We look forward to providing more details in the coming week(s), and happy to discuss with colleagues who will be on the ground at IGF in a little over a week."]*

- The US noted the proposal to develop an AI Pledge was discussed during the SC meeting in Tallinn. During the FOC Ministerial Meeting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the US's intention to leverage the FOC to develop a pledge on the procurement of AI technologies for governments.
  - The pledge emerges as a result of the US' domestic efforts to develop a strategy for how the US government should procure AI technologies in a rights-respecting way.
    - The US recognised that many FOC Members already have a variety of responsible practices they have committed to or are implementing, noting that this may not be the case for all governments.
    - The US noted the Pledge does not apply to the defence space.
      - The Netherlands noted the 2023 international summit on [Responsible AI in the Military Domain](#) and highlighted that a [25-point call-to-action](#) on AI in the military was developed.
  - Denmark inquired about whether there will be a challenge of developing and implementing the AI Pledge if a government does not have a domestic position on AI.
    - The US noted that the lack of governments' domestic position on AI further encourages the development of the Pledge.
      - For governments with a position on AI, the US noted the Pledge will seek to support existing frameworks, and for governments without a position on AI, it will aim to highlight the intersection of commitments and obligations to the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#).
- The Netherlands suggested further discussing with SC Members who are in the European Union, noting that the Council of Europe has a number of regulations on the topic.
  - The US noted they will continue to engage in these conversations, but underlined that due to time constraints, additional consultations ahead of developing the first draft may not be feasible.

**Action>>** The US to share the first draft of the AI Pledge with the Steering Committee. *[Please note that the U.S. is looking at early 2024 for the publication date of the Pledge, as shared in a written update following the meeting.]*

### Geneva Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) - Draft Agenda

- The SU noted the event will be a 2-day SCM and highlighted the potential of a SC meeting on Day 0, followed by a no-host dinner.
- The SU provided an outline of the agenda:
  - Day 1 [internal meeting day] will include:
    - Parallel FOC and FOC-AN meetings;
    - An FOC and FOC-AN Joint Roundtable;
    - Break-out meeting of the FOC sub-entities;
    - An evening reception.
  - Day 2 [open meeting day] would resemble the external sessions during the Rome SCM, and will provide an opportunity to facilitate further engagement with external stakeholders through potential sessions and workshops focused on AI and strengthening stakeholder engagement in multilateral processes.
    - Switzerland offered to share suggestions of local organisations that could help facilitate the workshop.

**Action>>** SU to circulate the Geneva SCM agenda to FOC Members once finalised.

#### **Program of Action 2024**

- The Netherlands noted that following SC comments on the Zero Draft, it will be sharing the First Draft for formal consultations shortly.

#### **AOB**

- Denmark noted that the FOC Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online (TFTIO), which it is co-leading with FOC-AN Member Wikimedia Foundation, has been established. Its predecessor, the Tech Democracy's Action Coalition on Trustworthy Information, will be holding a session at IGF in Kyoto, and plans to discuss a set of recommendations related to information integrity which would be developed and launched through the FOC TFTIO.
  - The session will be held on 9 October, 08:30 - 09:30 local time: "(Re)-Building Trust Online: A Call to Action".