

Steering Committee Meeting #9

Wednesday, 25 October 2023

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

Housekeeping

- The Support Unit (SU) gave an update on FOC activities:
 - The FOC participated in the 2023 Internet Governance Forum (IGF) with four sessions, and published two external outputs during the Conference:
 - [The Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections](#);
 - [The Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age](#).
 - The U.S. delivered the [Joint Statement on the Heightened Risks Associated with Surveillance Technologies and the Importance of Safeguards in the Use of these Tools](#) at the 54th UN Human Rights Council.
- The SU provided an overview of upcoming deadlines, processes and events, including:
 - Deadlines:
 - COB Tuesday, 7 November: Rolling deadline to submit bids for the 2025 FOC Chairship 2025. Please submit bids by emailing the SU.
 - COB Monday, 20 November: Deadline to submit mandate extension for FOC sub-entities. Please submit mandate extension requests by emailing the SU. *[Please note this update was shared in writing by the SU following the SC monthly call.]*
 - Processes (forthcoming in 2023, deadlines TBD):
 - Call for expressions of interest to serve on the 2024 FOC Steering Committee.
 - Request for comments on the first draft of the 2024 Program of Action (PoA).
 - Request for input on an end-of-year survey from the SU.
 - Events:
 - **FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting in Geneva** | 14 - 15 November | Geneva, Switzerland
 - The third Strategy and Coordination Meeting of 2023 will convene FOC Member States, Observers, and the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN).
 - The Steering Committee (SC) will be convening on Day 0, Monday, 13 November for an informal meeting and no-host dinner, for which more information will be shared shortly.

Discussion Items

Geneva Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM)

- The SU provided an overview of the draft SCM agenda, noting that it will be circulated to Members shortly.
 - Day 0:
 - SC meeting and no-host dinner.
 - Day 1 will focus on strategic discussions:
 - Parallel FOC and FOC-AN meetings;
 - FOC-only meeting will reflect on the U.S. Chairship in 2023, funding, and sub-entities.
 - FOC and FOC-AN trends session;
 - FOC and FOC-AN Joint Roundtable, focused on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the FOC's engagement in the process;
 - FOC and FOC-AN joint discussion on the 2024 PoA;

- In parallel with the 2024 PoA discussion, the FOC Geneva diplomatic network will be holding a meeting to discuss its activities in 2024;
 - An evening reception.
 - Day 2 will focus on learning:
 - The day will feature interactive sessions on priority policy areas identified in the 2023 PoA, with a focus on AI.
- Leveraging the location of the SCM, the Geneva diplomatic network will be invited to Day 1 and will hold a meeting for their members in parallel with the FOC and FOC-AN's discussion of the 2024 PoA.
 - The purpose of inviting the Geneva diplomatic network is to familiarise the network with the FOC's plans for 2024, as well as facilitate a better understanding of priorities at both capital and network levels during the Dutch Chairship.
- The U.S. noted that Day 2 would be open to invited external stakeholders.
- SC Members noted the following points regarding discussions of the GDC during the SCM:
 - The Netherlands noted plans for an interactive opportunity to identify priorities and discuss approaches regarding the GDC.
 - Switzerland inquired whether colleagues working on the GDC could observe the GDC discussion.
 - The U.S. and Netherlands noted interest in involving GDC colleagues in the session, highlighting the opportunity to discuss what the role of the FOC is in the process and how it can influence Member states in the negotiation process.
 - Denmark and Estonia suggested keeping the GDC discussion within the FOC points of contact to ensure that the Coalition is able to have in-depth discussions with a central focus on human rights.
 - Denmark further noted the importance of being intentional about what the FOC's objective and desired outcome from the GDC discussion is.
 - The U.S. noted plans to have Sweden's permanent representative in New York present on the GDC process during the SCM.
 - The current iteration of the draft SCM agenda notes the FOC-AN will be present in the room with the FOC during the GDC discussions, and the U.S. inquired with SC Members whether they prefer to have an FOC-only meeting first before discussing with other stakeholders.
 - Denmark, Canada, and the Netherlands expressed interest in having a government-only portion of the session.
 - The U.S. noted previous discussions about developing a GDC Position Paper and inquired with SC Members about whether a draft Position Paper should be prepared for the SCM.
 - The UK, Netherlands, and Canada noted that sharing a document with information such as a summary, key points, and recommendations ahead of the SCM would be helpful to facilitate meaningful conversation.
 - The Netherlands noted the topics identified in the GDC core submissions of the Tech Envoy are issues that the FOC has provided statements on, including, human rights, data protection, and regulation of AI.

Action>> The U.S. to finalise the Geneva Strategy and Coordination Meeting agenda, taking into account the Steering Committee discussion on the Global Digital Compact.

Joint Statements with Like-Minded Bodies

- The SU noted this item is a continuation of discussions that took place during the in-person SC meeting in Tallinn, Estonia, regarding the [FOC endorsement](#) of the Media Freedom Coalition [Statement on Transnational Repression of Journalists and Media Workers](#).

- To anticipate future opportunities for engagement with bodies external to the FOC, and upon review of the FOC Terms of Reference (ToR) and Standard Operating Procedure for developing statements (SOP), the SU suggested that statements to be jointly issued with third bodies are treated in line with existing statement practice as outlined in the ToR¹.
- The SU recommended the Chair socialise received requests from third bodies with the SC for good practice before drafting commences, highlighting that the purpose is to raise awareness and invite feedback from SC Members as the mechanisms to develop a joint statement are already in place.
- The U.S. noted the incentive for exploring this process is that the [Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse](#) had expressed interest in developing a joint statement on technology-facilitated gender-based violence with the FOC.
 - While all members of the Global Partnership are FOC Members, requests from non-FOC Member organisations could also be in scope.
- The SU underlined that if the lead drafter is a non-FOC Member, per the statement development process in the ToR and SOP, there will be multiple opportunities for FOC Members to review and provide feedback on the document.
- The U.S. noted this will facilitate the opportunity for the Coalition to engage more widely on digital issues with similar and complementary organisations, especially as digital technologies become increasingly ubiquitous in everyday life.

Program of Action 2024

- The Netherlands noted they incorporated feedback received on the 2024 PoA and are preparing a first draft to share with the FOC for consultation shortly.

Action>> Netherlands to circulate first draft of the 2024 Program of Action to the FOC.

AOB

- The Netherlands noted they recently released their [International Cyber Strategy \(ICS\) 2023-2028](#).

¹ 1. Penholder reaches out to FOC Chair; 2. FOC Chair approves development of a statement/ output; 3. Once approval is given, penholder drafts the statement/ output; 4. Penholder circulatea first draft to the SC, FOC, and FOC-AN (for a minimum of seven days); 5. Upon consolidation of comments, penholder develops second draft and circulates it to the FOC and FOC-AN; 6. Upon consolidation of comments, final draft is shared with SC for sign-off; 7. Final draft is circulated to the FOC for silence procedure (15 days, unless expedited).