

FREEDOM ONLINE COALITION

Program of Action 2019-2020

FOC Mission Statement: The Freedom Online Coalition is a group of governments deeply committed to the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also believe that that the human rights that people have offline must also be protected online. We commit to working together, and with all others who share these views, to support Internet freedom and protect fundamental human rights – free expression, association, assembly, and privacy online – worldwide. The FOC aims to be a proactive coalition that ensures Internet freedom issues are on the international policy agenda as a way to drive concrete policy changes and outcomes. For more information see the FOC's core documents [here](#).

Background: The following priorities were developed following consultations with FOC and FOC Advisory Network Members, including at the Strategy and Coordination Meeting held on 28 November 2018 at the FO Conference in Berlin. This document outlines the FOC's priority areas and key approaches for delivering the Program of Action 2019, as well as specific activities identified for each quarter of the year.

Priority Areas and Rationale

The Program of Action 2019 – 2020 identifies forthcoming activities for the FOC. These activities are guided by key challenges to human rights online as identified by FOC Members. The activities will be carried out over the course of Ghana's Chairmanship of the Coalition, which extends from 1 March 2019 – 1 March 2020.

State-sponsored restrictions to human rights online continues to be a key challenge for Internet freedom in 2019 – manifested by intentional disruptions to online networks, cross-border attacks on freedom of expression online, and other actions to restrict Internet freedom. Previously the FOC has made meaningful contributions to the global debate on [Internet censorship](#), [network disruptions](#) and [cross-border attacks](#) on freedom of expression online which makes it well-placed to leverage this work in relevant global forums. This trend is exacerbated by the closing of civic space worldwide, both online and offline, which directly challenges the exercise of human rights and an open and interoperable Internet, as affirmed in the FOC's '[Tallinn Agenda](#)'. Human rights defenders and other members of civil society are disproportionately affected by pressures and restrictions on online spaces.

In the face of some authoritarian tendencies of some regimes that pose a direct threat to an open, free and secure Internet, the FOC seeks to formulate a better offer for Internet governance. Digital divides remain acute globally, with the potential to significantly exacerbate existing inequalities. Closing the divide and promoting access is crucial for the exercise of human rights online and to achieving digital inclusion. Additionally, as the online threat landscape continues to evolve, the promotion and protection of human rights online in the context of cybersecurity continues to be a priority. In order to address this, the FOC recognises that human rights considerations should be mainstreamed in cybersecurity debates, through an open, inclusive and transparent approach. The FOC previously engaged on this issue area through former WG1 (e.g. [WG1's Recommendations](#) on human rights based approaches to cybersecurity). The FOC further recognises the rising concerns over the potential human rights implications of AI in online spaces and emerging technologies and the complex challenges to human rights caused by disinformation.

FOC Working Methods

The FOC endeavours to carry out its activities for 2019-2020 through the following working methods¹:

Diplomatic Coordination:

- Capital-level coordination of members;
- Coordination via local network in Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna;
- Bilateral discussions with other countries.

Shaping of Global Norms:

- Developing and promoting FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions;
- Raising awareness of priority issue areas and their implications for human rights online through public workshops/events.

Multistakeholder Engagement:

- Drawing on expertise and networks of Advisory Network maximize impact;
- Quarterly FOC-AN coordination calls to share information and explore opportunities for action;
- Annual Freedom Online Conference to increase awareness of Internet freedom issues and strategize for change;
- Public outreach events (Open Forums and speaking engagements) to increase awareness and collaboration.

¹ Based on the [Stockholm Terms of Reference](#).

Schedule of Activities, 1 March 2019 – 1 March 2020

The following indicates the provisional activities that the FOC endeavours to carry out to both directly address Internet freedom challenges and increase the Coalition's ability to respond by strengthening its operations. The activities outlined may be adapted in response to emerging trends.

First Quarter: March, April, May

Diplomatic Coordination:

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions, including the March Human Rights Council (HRC)
- Hold *Freedom on the Net* 2019 briefing combined with an FOC information session in New York
- Conduct a strategic review of FOC Statements and identify language that may be useful in multilateral forums
- Strengthen relationships with FOC members and build capacity of diplomatic networks

Shaping of Global Norms:

- Finalise Joint Statement on "Defending Civic Spaces" and coordinate strategy around its use with FOC-AN
- Develop Joint Statement on "Digital Divides" and coordinated strategy around its use with FOC-AN

Multistakeholder Engagement:

- Learning call on Internet freedom implications of Artificial Intelligence between FOC and FOC-AN
- Learning call on more effectively promoting a rights-respecting approach to the Internet with FOC-AN
- Strengthen mechanisms for FOC and FOC-AN information sharing to facilitate coordination

Second Quarter: June, July, August

Diplomatic Coordination:

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions including GGE and OEWG and June HRC

Shaping of Global Norms:

- Raise awareness of priority issues through public workshops/events including at RightsCon and EuroDIG
- Develop Joint Statement on "Internet Freedom Implications of Disinformation" and coordinated strategy around its use with FOC-AN
- Develop Joint Statement on "Human Rights Impact of Cybersecurity Laws" and coordinated strategy around its use with the FOC-AN

Multistakeholder Engagement:

- Strengthen FOC and FOC-AN work streams inspired by learning calls and other topics of interest
- FOC and FOC-AN strengthen strategic planning to collaboratively engage in key activities

Third Quarter: September, October, November

Diplomatic Coordination:

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions including September HRC, UNGA First and Third Committee

Shaping of Global Norms:

- Raise awareness of priority issue areas through public workshops/events at IGF (November)

Multistakeholder Engagement:

- Learning call on Big Data between FOC and FOC-AN

Fourth Quarter: December, January, February

Diplomatic Coordination:

- Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions

Shaping of Global Norms:

- Develop Joint Statement on "Internet Freedom Implications of Artificial Intelligence" and coordinated strategy around its use with FOC-AN

Multistakeholder Engagement:

- Advisory Network open call for Members; raising awareness of open call with global South stakeholders