

FREEDOM ONLINE COALITION PROGRAM OF ACTION 2021

– 10 years of the FOC: Looking ahead to the next decade of advancing Internet freedom and human rights online

FOC Mission Statement

The Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) 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 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 human rights – such as 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 Program of Action 2021 outlines FOC's priority areas and activities for the year 2021 and it was developed by FOC 2021 Chair Finland following input consultations with FOC and FOC Advisory Network Members. Activities will be carried out over the course of Finland's Chairship from 1 January to 31 December 2021. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face meetings may be replaced by virtual events.

Chairship Priorities and Outcomes

Policy priorities

Over the past few years, the FOC has made meaningful contributions to the global debates on [Internet censorship](#), [network disruptions](#), [cross-border attacks](#) on freedom of expression online, the [trend of closing civic space](#), [digital inclusion](#), [human rights impact of cybersecurity laws, practices and policies](#), and [COVID-19 and Internet Freedom](#). As part of its Program of Action 2020, the FOC also initiated work on exploring challenges to human rights caused by disinformation and potential [human rights implications of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies](#). These issues continue to directly affect the exercise of human rights and an open and interoperable Internet, as affirmed in the FOC's '[Tallinn Agenda](#)'. Furthermore, the ongoing pandemic has accentuated many of the above-mentioned issues, as more activities are taking place online than ever before, highlighting the importance and urgency to address them.

In 2021, as part of Finland's Chairship, the FOC intends to continue to leverage its work on digital inclusion, cybersecurity, disinformation and artificial intelligence, and remains committed to tackling these challenges through its key working methods¹ – diplomatic coordination, shaping of global norms, and commitment to multistakeholder engagement – and specific activities outlined below. In 2021 the FOC celebrates its 10th Anniversary which not only enables activities for increased visibility of the Coalition but also provides an opportunity for the FOC to look ahead and set goals and a vision for the 2020s. Finland is committed to finding ways to enhance the visibility, continuity and effectiveness of the Coalition.

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

Priority outcomes

For the 2021 FOC Chairship, Finland has outlined the following priorities:

- **Marking the 10-year anniversary of the FOC:**

The FOC will mark the 10-year anniversary of the founding of the Coalition by a number of events and a communication campaign throughout the year, including a ministerial-level meeting, preferably in the margins of the UN General Assembly High-Level week; and the Annual FO Conference in Finland on 2-3 December 2021. These will be opportunities to present and promote the FOC fundamental values. The ministerial meeting in particular is an opportunity to raise the visibility of the FOC and make a political statement on its vision and mandate for the next decade. The FO Conference is a multistakeholder platform for discussion among governments, civil society, the private sector and others to share information, develop joint strategies and combine efforts in the 2020s.

Outputs: Ministerial Communiqué/Declaration of the ministerial meeting and Policy Outcome Document of the FO conference setting goals and a vision for the 2020s, a media and communications plan

- **More timely and continuous local diplomatic coordination:**

Finland will dedicate efforts as Chair to contribute with other member states to the existing FOC local diplomatic networks and establish an FOC network in San Francisco/Silicon Valley through meetings and support of coordination of FOC Members in multilateral fora.

Outputs: A long-term strategic approach and guidelines for leading diplomatic networks

- **Strengthening engagement with governments worldwide, non-governmental stakeholders and co-operation with global and regional organisations:**

This will be pursued through enhanced communication and coordination with FOC-AN on long term strategic goals by organising quarterly FOC-AN coordination calls to share information and explore opportunities for action; annual Freedom Online Conference and other multistakeholder platforms to increase awareness of and action on Internet freedom issues with an emphasis on gender issues and most vulnerable groups. As Chair, Finland will work closely with other FOC Members to enhance communication and support governments' engagement in the Coalition and will seek to engage in joint activities and dialogue with global and regional organisations, civil society and tech industry/private sector also in regions which are not yet well-represented in the FOC to promote Internet freedom in development.

Outputs: A series of events on internet freedom focused on engaging the global South

- **Advancing FOC's agenda on priority issues – digital inclusion, cybersecurity, disinformation, artificial intelligence, challenges by authoritarian regimes:**

This will be pursued through leveraging relevant FOC language in international forums and resolutions; raising awareness of priority issue areas and their implications for human rights online through public workshops/events; and follow-up and strategic implementation of FOC interventions, including through thematic internal reporting and thematic task forces.

Outputs: A series of events/workshops/FOC interventions addressing the priority issues, a strategic review/survey of existing statements

Schedule of Activities, 1 January – 31 December 2021

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: January, February, March
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions, including the March HRC.● Conduct a strategic review of existing FOC Statements and identify language to leverage in relevant multilateral forums.● Develop dissemination strategies and follow-up plans with a timetable for the promotion of FOC joint statements, such as "Spread of Disinformation Online".● Promote the Joint Statement on "Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights" and coordinate strategy around its use with FOC and FOC-AN through the Task Force on AI and Human Rights.● Support the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Statement on "Digital Inclusion" through the Task Force on Digital Equality.● Continue strengthening relationships among FOC members and build capacity of diplomatic networks via side sessions and learning calls.● Strengthen mechanisms for FOC and FOC-AN information sharing to facilitate coordination, including at FOC Strategy and Coordination Meetings.● Develop a media and communications plan in order to raise the media profile and visibility of the Coalition and its goals and vision.
Second Quarter: April, May, June
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions including the June HRC.● Continue strengthening relationships among FOC members and build capacity of diplomatic networks via events, side sessions and learning calls.● Raise awareness of priority issues through public workshops/events including at World Press Freedom Conference, Stockholm Internet Forum and RightsCon.● Strengthen mechanisms for FOC and FOC-AN information sharing to facilitate coordination, including at FOC Strategy and Coordination Meetings.● Develop a Ministerial Communiqué/Declaration with a vision and goals for the 2020s.
Third Quarter: July, August, September
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions including the September HRC, UNGA First and Third Committee.● Mark the 10-year anniversary of the founding of the Coalition by organising a ministerial-level meeting in the margins of UNGA high level week.● Finalise and launch a Ministerial Communiqué/Declaration with a vision and goals for the 2020s.● Raise awareness of priority issues through public workshops/events including at Global Conference for Media Freedom.● Strengthen FOC and FOC-AN work streams inspired by learning calls and other topics of interest.● Develop an FO Conference Outcome Document with goals and practical steps for the 2020s.
Fourth Quarter: October, November, December
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Promote FOC language/joint statements in relevant international forums and resolutions.● Raise awareness of priority issue areas through public workshops/events including at IGF and the Generation Equality Forum.● Strengthen mechanisms for FOC and FOC-AN information sharing to facilitate coordination, including at FOC Strategy and Coordination Meetings.● Mark FOC 10-year anniversary, share information and develop joint strategies for a more visible and effective organisation including at Freedom Online 10-year anniversary conference in Finland.● Finalise and launch an FO Conference Outcome Document with goals and practical steps for the 2020s.