



June 2015

FOC Joint Statement Presented at the 29th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

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On behalf of FOC members, the Ambassador of Mongolia presented a Joint Statement on Online Freedoms at the 29th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on Monday, June 22 under Agenda Item 3, General Debate.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Freedom Online Coalition – a group of 26 countries from every major region of the world, which are dedicated to working closely together for the promotion, protection, and enjoyment of fundamental freedoms and human rights online. The intergovernmental coalition reaffirms its commitment to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including privacy and freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

Mongolia has chaired the Coalition over the past year, and I would like to extend the group's warm welcome to the newest members – Lithuania, Norway, and Australia, which joined during the Mongolian chairmanship.

In May 2015, on the heels of World Press Freedom Day, the coalition held its 5th annual high-level conference in Ulaanbaatar. There the group underscored its strong commitment to the Coalition's Founding Declaration, which affirms that governments must ensure the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, both on the Internet and through other connective technologies, and should support individuals, organisations and institutions in employing new technologies to promote human rights, democracy and development. Since its creation in the Hague in 2011, the Coalition countries have been working closely together to share best practices and learn from their collective experiences.

The Coalition recognizes the need to actively engage with all relevant stakeholders, including governments, businesses, civil society, academics and other experts, in protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms online, and underlines its commitment to continuously work together in a multi-stakeholder process to further Internet freedom globally. We fully support the principle first affirmed in the 2012 Human Rights Council consensus resolution 20/8 that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online.

The Coalition remains committed to further implementation of the Tallinn Agenda for Freedom Online, which was formulated in 2014 in close cooperation with various stakeholders as an outcome of the fourth annual Coalition conference in Tallinn. The Agenda set forth the framework and main principles for the work of the Coalition, which continues to be implemented by three moderated

multistakeholder workings groups currently examining an open and secure Internet, the rule of law and global digital development, and privacy and transparency.

The members of the Coalition are concerned over increasing measures by States to restrict Internet freedom for their citizens, and in many instances measures that unduly interfere with the Internet use of individuals residing beyond their borders. The Coalition remains deeply critical of increased government restrictions on social media users and content, which can undermine the Internet's open and global nature that has been a driving force towards its social and economic success and overall development. We strongly condemn any restrictions to individual rights to freedom of opinion and expression, or assembly and association online that are inconsistent with international human rights obligations. We urge all states to fully respect and protect the enjoyment of human rights online, including by journalists and human rights defenders, particularly when it affects their ability to pursue their professions free from fear of being subjected to attacks, reprisals, intimidation, politically-motivated prosecutions and arbitrary libel suits. And to put those words into action; the coalition has initiated the Digital Defenders Partnership – a communal fund to protect human rights defenders and journalists against digital emergencies and attacks.

We welcome and follow closely the work of the UN mandate holders and would like to encourage them to devote special attention and assistance to the countries where human rights online are unduly restricted. The Freedom Online Coalition remains committed to its dedication to promote and protect everyone's rights and freedoms online.

Thank you!

Freedom Online Coalition Background

The Freedom Online Coalition is a cross-regional group of 26 governments that collaborate to advance Internet freedom worldwide. The Coalition provides a forum for like-minded governments to coordinate efforts and work with civil society and the private sector to support the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms online.

The mission and vision of the Freedom Online Coalition are founded upon the notion that human rights apply online as well as offline, as confirmed in resolutions 20/8 and 26/13, adopted by consensus by the UN Human Rights Council in July 2012 and June 2014, as well as resolutions 68/167 and 69/166, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly in December 2013 and 2014.

The FOC seeks to identify best practices regarding the application of human rights in the evolving online landscape, as well as to call attention to conditions that undermine those rights.

The FOC, through the Digital Defenders Partnership, also provides rapid response to a range of threats to Internet freedom; from supporting bloggers and cyber activists who find themselves under digital attack, to helping them enjoy their human rights online in countries where the Internet is censored, not accessible or freedom is otherwise restricted. More information on the Digital Defenders Partnership is available at: <http://www.digitaldefenders.org/>.

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