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FOC Joint Statement on Human Rights in the Context of International Security and the Work of the UN GGE

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The Freedom Online Coalition notes that the 2016/2017 Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (GGE) has begun deliberations on a report.

The Members of the Freedom Online Coalition welcome that previous GGE reports emphasized that State efforts to address the security of Information and Communication Technologies must go hand-in-hand with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Freedom Online Coalition underscores that respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms is of central importance in the application of international law to State use of Information and Communication Technologies. States must comply with their obligations under international law to respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Therefore, the Freedom Online Coalition urges the GGE experts to consider these points, and to emphasize in their report the importance of respecting human rights for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Freedom Online Coalition Background

The FOC is a multilateral coalition of 30 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, the private sector, and other Internet stakeholders to support the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms online. The FOC invites all states that support an open and interoperable Internet to apply to join the FOC.

The mission and vision of the FOC are founded upon the notion that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online; a pioneering notion originally outlined in the founding FOC Hague Declaration, reaffirmed in the Nairobi Terms of Reference, Tallinn Agenda and San José Statement, and further confirmed in UN Human Rights Council resolutions 20/8, 26/13, 28/16 and 32/13, adopted July 5, 2012, June 26, 2014, March 26, 2015, and July 1, 2016, respectively, as well as resolutions 68/167, 69/166 and 71/199 adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly respectively on December 18, 2013, December 18, 2014, and December 19, 2016.

The FOC seeks to identify best practices regarding the application of human rights obligations and commitments 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 exercise their human rights online in Internet repressive environments. More information on the Freedom Online Coalition is available at: <http://www.freedomonlinecoalition.com/>. More information on the Digital Defenders Partnership is available at: <http://www.digitaldefenders.org/>.

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