



May 2016

# FOC's Strategic Review Working Group Joint Statement on Independent Report by University of Pennsylvania

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The Freedom Online Coalition's Strategic Review Working Group issued the following statement on the report released on 4th May 2016 by Ms. Susan Morgan, contracted by the University of Pennsylvania, based on her external assessment of the Coalition's membership, governance and structure, efforts and activities, and funding:

On behalf of the Freedom Online Coalition, the Strategic Review Working Group would like to thank the author and editorial team of this independent report for their work and the contribution they have made to the ongoing discussions around the future direction of the Freedom Online Coalition. The 6th Freedom Online Conference, to be held in Costa Rica later this year, will provide an opportunity to reflect on five years of the Freedom Online Coalition.

Since its founding in 2011, the membership, direction, and activities of the Coalition have grown and diversified, though its core aims remain consistent and ever more relevant. As part of our Strategic Review of the Coalition, which was endorsed by the Ministerial Conference in Mongolia in May 2015, we will be reflecting on existing challenges and opportunities to further strengthen the Coalition. The work of the author of this report, in assessing how the Freedom Online Coalition is perceived by a range of stakeholders both within and outside the Coalition will be valuable in allowing us to assess those challenges and opportunities and understand the added value the Coalition can bring to promoting internet freedom. We will consider this report, and the author's recommendations, alongside a number of other sources and inputs as our Strategic Review progresses, with a view to further discussion at the 6th Freedom Online Conference.

We encourage all Freedom Online Coalition members to incorporate the independent report into internal discussions and external consultations with domestic stakeholders on the Strategic Review, and to help integrate these inputs into a unified vision on how to move the Coalition forward.

## Freedom Online Coalition Background

The Freedom Online Coalition is a cross-regional group of 29 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. For instance, the FOC's multistakeholder working group on "An Internet Free and Secure" seeks to bring a human rights framing to ongoing debates on cybersecurity and aims to develop, through multistakeholder dialogue, meaningful outputs that feed into existing processes.

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 countries where the Internet is censored, not accessible or where freedom is otherwise restricted. More information on the Digital Defenders Partnership is available at: <http://www.digitaldefenders.org/>.

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