



Freedom Online Coalition - Friends of the Chair Call #2

Thursday 28 February, 14:00 UTC

Attendance: Canada, Costa Rica, Estonia, Germany, Ghana, Netherlands, UK, US; Support Unit;

Apologies: Finland, Norway

Housekeeping

- FOC outlook for the month ahead:
 - The Support Unit (SU) noted that the 40th Session of the March Human Rights Council had commenced and would end on 22 March.
 - SU informed Members that the Advisory Network (FOC-AN) co-Chair election is underway, with the announcement due by 11 March.
 - SU noted that the first Quarterly Call of the year with the FOC-AN will be scheduled for mid to end of March, ahead of the next FoTC Call.
 - Canada informed Members of their upcoming Geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence Symposium, to be held in Ottawa on 12 March.

Action >> Members to inform Canada if their embassy colleagues are able to attend the Geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence Symposium, in Ottawa on 12 March.

FOC Chairmanship

- Ghana provided an update on their Chairmanship for 2019.
 - Ghana noted that their FOC representatives had recently met the SU in Accra to discuss the Chairmanship, including the Conference, and that they would share more information with colleagues when the timing of the Conference is further clarified.
 - Members unanimously welcomed Ghana and expressed their excitement for working with Ghana in their role as Chair.

Action >> Ghana to confirm timing of the Annual Conference in coming months.

Program of Action 2019

- SU provided an update on the Program of Action, which has been finalised following the FOC-wide silence procedure *[final version attached]*
- Diplomatic Coordination:
 - Members provided updates on promoting FOC language at the March Human Rights Council Session
 - The Netherlands noted that Canada and the Netherlands had drafted a joint statement for Item 3 on Freedom of Expression.
 - The Netherlands noted that the Canadian representation will be contacting the FOC Diplomatic Network in Geneva for coordination around the statement, which provides an opportunity for the FOC to get involved in a discussion on the role that digital technology plays in freedom of expression.
 - Estonia welcomed the initiative of the joint statement initiated by Canada and the Netherlands. Estonia noted in addition that there are a lot of possibilities for

highlighting the importance of internet freedom in the frames of the HRC ongoing session, including the high-level segment, interactive dialogues with various special rapporteurs (for example on Human Rights Defenders) etc. Estonia is trying to use these opportunities and encourages other FOC states to do the same.

- The US provided an update on their plans to hold Freedom on the Net 2019 briefing/FOC information session in New York. The plan is to engage with the New York Diplomatic Network to organise the information session, which would be held in late March/early April. The US noted this would be an opportunity to activate the network ahead of the UNGA.
- Members provided an update on strategic review of FOC Statements and identification of language for use in multilateral forums.
 - The Netherlands noted their interest in developing a step-by-step approach to employing Network Disruptions Statement, observing that there had been a shared consensus on the value of using existing statements.
 - The Netherlands invited Members to join their work in considering how to take this forward, even in collaboration with other organisations.
- Shaping Global Norms:
 - Canada provided an update on Defending Civic Spaces Statement.
 - Canada noted that the silence procedure had been broken, however the final version of the statement was expected to be circulated shortly under an expedited silence procedure of 10 days.
 - Ghana and Germany provided an update on Digital Divides Statement
 - Ghana and Germany noted they would be coordinating on the first draft of the statement.
 - Estonia noted that they would be co-drafting the statement on Cybersecurity Laws with the Netherlands.
 - The US introduced a proposal to establish a targeted mechanism to address the issues of AI and disinformation through setting up designated task forces or equivalent.
 - The purpose of the mechanism would be to enable multistakeholder collaboration and the involvement of like-minded governments on the topics of AI and disinformation, and the US noted that there is a provision for ad hoc working groups in the Stockholm ToR.
 - The US at present is developing a one-pager, which will be shared with the Coalition and welcomed input by Members.
 - Canada expressed their willingness to assist in a liaison role with the FOC-AN. Canada also noted the importance of ensuring that the mechanisms proposed do not duplicate existing structures or efforts.
 - The Netherlands asked that the US clarify how the proposal related to the existing Stockholm ToR as well as the proactive advice that had been submitted by the FOC-AN..
 - The US thanked colleagues for their feedback and noted the intent is to ensure the proposal works in line with existing provisions. The US stated they would follow up with further information following the call.
- Multistakeholder Engagement:

- The SU noted that they will be facilitating a learning call on the Internet freedom implications of Artificial Intelligence between FOC and FOC-AN, likely to be held in late March. The SU invited Members to share key interests on the topic or questions for the FOC-AN ahead of the call.
- The SU additionally noted that it will be facilitating a learning call on more effectively promoting a rights-respecting approach to the Internet with FOC-AN, to be scheduled for early April. The SU invited Members to share key interests on the topic or questions for the FOC-AN ahead of the call.
- The SU informed Members that it is working to strengthen mechanisms for FOC and FOC-AN information sharing to facilitate coordination.
- Internal document complementing Program of Action 2019
 - The SU introduced the document which had been developed with the US, and highlighted that it been designed to to complement the external Program of Action.
 - The document includes activities that are mentioned in the Program of Action and activities that support their achievement, as well as leads, timelines, and deadlines to increase transparency and accountability.
 - The document has been organized around the three pillars of the FOC's work and the components of the Program of Action with the addition of a fourth component, strengthening FOC operations. This additional component had been integrated as Members had noted that the importance of strengthening the FOC's operations to increase the impact of the Coalition and to enable the FOC to more effectively advance Internet freedom.
 - The SU additionally noted that the document is a key tool for the Member engagement strategy, as all Members will be encouraged to lead at least one activity.
 - Members thanked the US for their effort in creating this resource.
 - The Netherlands noted that it would be useful to ensure that the internal document is a living document to assist tracking progress on activities.
 - Canada thanked the US and noted appreciation for following up on the conversations and suggestions from the FOC meetings in Berlin.

Action >> Members to inform SU of key areas of interest and questions on the topic of AI to help inform the upcoming learning call with the FOC-AN.

Action >> Members to inform SU of key areas of interest and questions on the topic on more effectively promoting a rights-respecting approach to the Internet to help inform the upcoming learning call with the FOC-AN.

Action >> US to share proposal for mechanism to address AI and disinformation with Coalition.

Action >> SU to share internal document complementing Program of Action 2019 with the Coalition.

Operationalising the Stockholm TOR

- Advisory Network
 - The SU provided an update on Advisory Network activities:
 - FOC-AN Elections
 - The SU noted that the FOC-AN is currently in the process of holding their co-Chair elections, with the announcement due by 11 March.

The new co-Chairs will be part of the forthcoming Quarterly Call with the FOC-AN.

- Quarterly Call with the FOC-AN
 - The SU highlighted that the first Quarterly Call of the year between the FOC and the FOC-AN would be scheduled for March. The SU reminded Members that the call is the key method of information sharing between the networks, providing feedback on activities and planning forthcoming activities.
 - The SU invited Members to share any key agenda items or topics ahead of the call.

Action >> SU to notify Members of newly elected FOC-AN co-Chairs.

Action >> Members to inform SU of key agenda items for Quarterly Call with the FOC-AN.

FOC Membership

- Update on FOC Member engagement
 - The SU noted that an internal engagement strategy was developed with the assistance of the US and the Netherlands, to re-establish the points of contact of all FOC Members and within each of the diplomatic networks. The goal is to share an updated comprehensive contact list with the Coalition w/c 18 March.
 - Members provided updates on their progress on the internal engagement strategy.
 - The Netherlands expressed support for the initiative and noted that an especially useful approach is to remind Members that the FOC is a tool for Members to carry out their priorities, and to engage on their priorities at an international level. The Netherlands noted Austria had raised, for example, the potential of the FOC engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals.
 - Germany noted that locating the points of contact had been straightforward, however the challenge is ensuring that all Members identify the value of being active in the FOC and ensuring that all Members are involved in FOC activities.
 - Estonia welcomed the initiative on ensuring that all FOC members are involved in the activities of FOC, affirmed Estonia's full cooperation in this regard and noted that in order to ensure active involvement by all members, it is paramount that all FOC members (also the POC's identified recently) receive all of the relevant information.
- Members were invited to provide an update on the enlargement of FOC membership, including outreach efforts.

Action >> SU to share updated contact database with FOC w/c March 18.

AOB

- The US highlighted the Forum on Digital Rights and Inclusion in Lagos, taking place April 23-25 would provide an exciting opportunity for FOC and AN engagement and for engagement with civil society stakeholders. The SU stated it would review resources for facilitating participation.

- The SU noted that the first in person meeting of the year had been held in Helsinki on Tuesday 25 February, on the margins of the Council of Europe Conference on AI and Human Rights, hosted by Finland.