

Friends of the Chair Call #7 (September)

Wednesday, 29 September 2021 at 14:00 UTC

Attending: Finland, Canada, Estonia, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, US

Housekeeping

- SU noted there are no outstanding action items from the Friends of the Chair monthly call #6 (August).
- SU welcomed Germany's new POC, Cordula Geinitz, who is succeeding Carlo Welz.
- In accordance with the Internal PoA, the SU:
 - Has hired a Project Assistant for the FOC, Tea Piacun.
 - Will be reaching out to FOC members and continue the fundraising efforts for 2022 to help support the implementation of the PoA 2022.
 - Has developed a communications strategy in cooperation with Independent Diplomat. The strategy has been shared with the Chair, and upon Finland's review and approval, the document will be circulated to the FOC.
- FOC outlook and calendar
 - *Internal events:*
 - September 30 - Task Force on Digital Equality Monthly Call
 - September 29 - Silicon Valley Working Group Monthly Call
 - TBC October - T-FAIR monthly call
 - October 20 - FOC-AN Call
 - October 27 - Friends of the Chair call
 - *External events:*
 - December 8 (preliminary schedule) - IGF FOC Open Forum on Internet Governance in the 2020s
 - *Coming up in October:*
 - Program of Action (PoA) 2022 development process
 - Second draft of the Political Declaration

Action point >> SU to circulate email to FOC Members regarding IGF attendance.

Action point >> SU to circulate the communications strategy with the FOC upon Finland's approval.

Program of Action 2021

- 10th Anniversary
 - Political Declaration
 - Finland noted the second draft of the Political Declaration is being signed-off by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
 - Finland highlighted that the commitments outlined in the Declaration have been condensed to reflect the Coalition's priorities and vision for the next 10 years.
 - The Political Declaration will aim to highlight the relevance of countering negative trends such as Internet shutdowns, surveillance, disinformation, and the importance of digital inclusion.
 - FO Conference
 - The FO Conference will be taking place in an online format from 29 November to 3 December, culminating in the High-level Ministerial meeting.
 - Finland noted it is working with the Support Unit (SU) to put together a program for the Conference.
 - SU noted it has received 16 session proposals for the Conference.

- FOC Member states' ministers will be receiving invitations within the next two weeks to participate in the High-level Ministerial meeting.
 - Ministers will also be receiving guiding questions ahead of the Ministerial meeting.
- Finland noted more information on the Conference will be shared with the Coalition in the coming weeks.

Action point >> SU to circulate the revised timeline for the Political Declaration process.

Action point >> Finland to circulate second draft of the Political Declaration to the Friends of the Chair.

Action point >> Finland to circulate invitations to FOC Members for the High-level ministerial meeting at the FO Conference.

- Diplomatic Coordination:
 - Geneva
 - Finland noted the Finnish mission in Geneva will be organising a coordination meeting following the 48th session of the UN Human Rights Council.
 - Paris
 - Canada noted the Paris network and T-FAIR are planning on putting together talking points towards the [UNESCO General Conference](#) (November 9-24) around the issue of ethics and artificial intelligence.
 - New York
 - US noted there was not significant room for engagement at the High-level week at UNGA76, and noted the aim to have at least one diplomatic coordination effort in New York until the end of the year.
 - Vienna: N/A
- Shaping Global Norms/ Advancing Priority Issues:
 - Country-specific statements
 - SU provided an overview of the country-specific statements questionnaire, to which 17 Member states responded.
 - US noted that issuing country-specific statements should be reached by consensus, and should not be postponed much longer in the interest of elevating the Coalition's position in the international field.
 - Should the FOC come to the decision to make such statements, US noted the need to develop a standard operating procedure to issuing them, and a way for Members to opt-out of statements they do not support.
 - The Friends emphasised the need to address non-responsive Members of the Coalition, not just in the case of country-specific statements but in general dealings of the FOC.
 - The Friends agreed that not issuing country-specific statements makes it difficult for the FOC to engage with relevant initiatives, and highlighted bilateral discussions with less active Members as a tool to move the matter forward.
 - Finland noted the appetite for bilateral engagement, and noted it would come back to Members regarding next steps and suggestions around issuing country-specific statements.
 - Disinformation (Finland/ UK)
 - The FOC's online Open Forum session at IGF will focus on the 10th anniversary of the FOC and Internet governance in the 2020s, covering topics of disinformation, AI, and digital inclusion.

- Task Force on AI and Human Rights (Canada)
 - Canada noted the Paris network and T-FAIR are planning on putting together talking points towards the [UNESCO General Conference](#) (November 9-24) around the issue of ethics and artificial intelligence.
- Task Force on Digital Equality (Germany/Ghana)
 - SU noted the group is currently discussing its main priorities for the remaining months of their mandate, as well as exploring topics and speakers for holding learning calls.
- Cybersecurity: N/A
- Challenges by authoritarian regimes: N/A
- Stock language on privacy
 - Canada noted the stock language on privacy is being negotiated.
- Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach:
 - Silicon Valley Working Group
 - SU noted that the Group will be reconvening this month after a 2-month summer hiatus, and will be discussing trends & challenges in content regulation with representatives from Google.

Action point >> Finland to come back to Members regarding next steps and suggestions around issuing country-specific statements.

Chairship 2022

- Canada noted that it is still under the Caretaker Convention following recent elections, and is awaiting approval for the Program of Action 2022.
- The PoA 2022 reflects the consultations around the four pillars of digital inclusion (connectivity, literacy, civic participation, and safety), and will be circulated once approvals are received.

Advisory Network (AN)

- **Finland** highlighted the FOC-AN Proactive Advice on Digital Harms Related to Human Rights in Afghanistan and noted that during the FOC-AN monthly call, AccessNow proposed a potential briefing for the FOC on the matter.
 - Finland noted it welcomes this kind of information sharing, and inquired whether there is interest for such a briefing among the Friends.
 - The SU noted the Friends were receptive to the idea in the last Friends call, and noted that unless there are any objections, there are no barriers for AccessNow to hold the briefing and Members to coordinate.
- Finland noted the possibility of another proactive advice from the FOC-AN on the FOC's engagement with the Summit for Democracy.

AOB

- **US** thanked the Friends for their feedback on the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns concept note.
 - US noted the country-specific statements element of the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns relies on the FOC's general decision on the matter, and emphasised that the Task Force is developing a threshold for issuing such statements once a decision is made.
 - The Task Force would include three lines of effort:
 - Knowledge and best-practices-sharing
 - Rapid response
 - Advocacy

- US invited Members to indicate which line of effort they are most interested in participating in when joining the Task Force.
- SU noted the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns concept note is currently being reviewed, and the Friends have until **Sunday, October 3** to submit comments or objections before it is circulated with the full membership.
- **US** encouraged Members to respond to the Demarche from the US regarding potential commitments, deliverables, and shaping ideas surrounding the Summit for Democracy, with an emphasis on the intersection of democracy with technology and Internet freedom.
 - US noted it will be organising a variety of events around the Summit in December, and confirmed that even though it is not clear on the extent to which the FOC will be engaging with the Summit, there are plans to include an FOC event.
 - SU noted that the FOC-AN has also suggested coordination around the Summit, as well as holding a potential FO Conference session related to the Summit.

Action point >> Friends to submit comments or objections to the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns Concept note by emailing Niki Masghati with a CC to the Support Unit.

Action point >> US and SU to coordinate potential FOC engagement and role in the Summit for Democracy.