

## Minutes of the Friends of the Chair Call #4 (May)

26 May 2021 at 14:00 UTC

Attendance: Finland (FOC Chair), Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, US; Support Unit [SU]

### Housekeeping

- Recap of outstanding action items from the Friends of the Chair monthly call #3
- SU and Finland to share an outline of the consultation process to develop the Political Declaration with the FOC. *[This has since been completed.]*
  - Canada to share the revised stock language on privacy with FOC.
  - Friends to consider next steps in addressing FOC policy of not issuing country-specific statements.
- In accordance with the Internal Program of Action
  - The SU has hired:
    - A Communications and Engagement Assistant, starting on 1 June, to support the implementation of activities outlined in the FOC communications strategy;
    - A Communications Consultant to develop a media and social media strategy.
  - The SU is currently working on revamping the FOC website.
- Outlook for the month ahead
  - *Internal FOC events:*
    - May 26 - Silicon Valley Working Group monthly Call
    - May 27 - Task Force on Digital Equality monthly Call
    - June 30 - Friends of the Chair monthly Call
    - June (TBC) - T-FAIR monthly call
    - June (TBC) - FOC-AN monthly call
    - July 5/6 - Strategy and Coordination meeting
    - July 7/8 - FOC/ AN Joint Roundtable
  - *External FOC events:*
    - May 27 - FOC Africa Outreach event in Kenya, *Advancing Human Rights-Based Approaches to Cybersecurity and Data Protection*
    - June 11 - RightsCon: *Unpacking the digital inclusion paradox: The Freedom Online Coalition's Task Force on Digital Equality* (22:00 - 23:00 UTC)

**Action >>** SU to circulate finalised website to the Friends and confirm the launch date.

### Program of Action 2021

- High-level ministerial meeting and Political Declaration
  - Finland is developing the first draft of the Political Declaration, and will be circulating it in the latter part of June.
    - Finland has used previously agreed language and priorities from FOC Joint Statements in the drafting process.

**Action >>** SU and Finland to share an outline of the consultation process to develop the Political Declaration with the FOC. *[This has since been completed.]*

- **Diplomatic Coordination:**
  - Geneva
    - The network lead (Finland) is planning on hosting an information-sharing, internal expert meeting ahead of the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council.
    - The network is also considering developing an FOC statement on freedom of expression which would reference the [FOC Joint Statement on Spread of Disinformation](#), and be presented during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur of freedom of expression at the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

- US and UK suggested having a discussion with the Friends on the language included in the statement, and including broadening it beyond the issue of disinformation.
  - Paris
    - The network leads (Canada and Finland) are aiming to set up an FOC follow up meeting after the second round of the UNESCO Draft Recommendation on the Ethics of AI negotiations (taking place 21-25 June) during the week commencing June 14.
      - Netherlands noted it would be useful to coordinate ahead of the next UNESCO negotiations, and potentially seek AN advice.
  - New York
    - The network leads (US and Finland) are organising a side-event on Internet Shutdowns on June 14, co-sponsored by the Netherlands.
      - More information on the event is forthcoming.
    - The leads are currently developing the work plan for the network.
    - US noted it will aim to track all Internet freedom related issues and actions in New York, which also extends to emerging technologies.
      - US noted that discussions regarding the Cybercrime Treaty will be taking place in New York this year.
      - However, there is a major push from governments to have these in Vienna, which would make having an FOC lead for the Vienna network next year pivotal.
      - The AN have submitted two pieces of proactive advice on the Cybercrime Treaty which the US has shared with colleagues. The US is interested in a US-specific (at minimum) briefing from the FOC-AN.
  - Vienna: N/A

**Action >>** SU and Finland to follow up on Finland's FOC Interactive Dialogue statement on freedom of expression during the next UN Human Rights Council.

**Action >>** Friends to let US and SU know if interested in an FOC-AN briefing on the Cybercrime Treaty.

- **Shaping Global Norms/ Advancing Priority Issues:**
  - Finland provided an update on the priority issue of disinformation:
    - The FOC hosted a virtual session *Human Rights-Centred Internet Governance in the 2020s: Disinformation, Digital Inclusion and Artificial Intelligence* at the Stockholm Internet Forum.
  - Canada provided an update on the Task Force on AI and Human Rights:
    - The group has held the following calls in April and May:
      - Learning Call on AI and Privacy;
      - Call on Council of Europe's Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI) multi-stakeholder consultation;
      - Call on UNESCO to discuss its Recommendation on the Ethics of AI.
      - Call on the UN Resolution on New and Emerging Digital Technologies and Human Rights.
    - Canada is currently exploring options to join AI panels at RightsCon to discuss the FOC's work and the FOC [Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights](#).
      - The Netherlands noted it is organising a panel on AI and invited Canada to explore collaboration.
  - The SU provided an update on the Task Force on Digital Equality:
    - The group is currently exploring topics and speakers for holding learning calls, and discussing their planned session at RightsCon.
  - Cybersecurity / Challenges by authoritarian regimes: N/A
  - Stock language on privacy

- The revised stock language on privacy will be shared with Members once the document is finalised.

**Action >>** Canada to share the revised stock language on privacy with FOC.

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach**
  - SU provided an update on the Silicon Valley Working Group:
    - The group's monthly call in May covered the theme of disinformation and featured presentations from Twitter on challenges and approaches to disinformation, and Microsoft on deepfakes and malicious synthetic media.
  - FOC Africa Outreach
    - Finland highlighted the events in Tunisia (virtual), Ghana (hybrid), and Ethiopia (virtual) as successful so far, with one more event in Kenya coming up [*This has since been completed*].
    - Finland emphasised some of the key takeaways and best practices for organising similar outreach activities.
      - Ensuring government buy-in through:
        - Closely involving local embassies;
      - Tailoring themes to local interests within the FOC framework.

**Action>>** Finland and the SU to coordinate to prepare readouts of the FOC Africa Outreach events, as well as key takeaways and best practices for organising similar outreach activities.

#### **Advisory Network (AN)**

- The AN held their monthly call on May 25. The next call will be scheduled in June, which Finland is planning to join.
- The AN has submitted the Proactive Advice on the Cybercrime Ad Hoc Committee's (AHC) procedural matters on May 21.

#### **FOC Membership**

- The SU provided an overview of the membership procedure, as per the [Terms of Reference](#) (ToR):
  - Country submits the letter of intent to the SU/Chair.
  - The Chair forwards the letter to the Friends.
  - The Friends of the Chair are asked to provide comments within thirty days.
  - Separately, during this time, the SU produces a report assessing the countries' track record of protecting and promoting human rights and Internet freedom domestically and internationally, in accordance with the criteria set out in section III.a. of the ToR.
  - The Chair will then circulate the application package (the country's letters of intent, comments received from the FotC, and the SU's report) to the FotC to review and decide whether to recommend the applicant for membership.
    - If consensus is reached, the application package, together with any other information the FotC deems relevant, will be sent to the full membership for silence procedure.
    - If not, the applicant can be offered an opportunity to apply for an Observer status.

#### **AOB**

- US thanked UK and Canada for their cooperation with the US in the G7, and for helping to include FOC language on internet shutdowns in the [G7's Foreign and Development Ministers' Statement](#) and [Digital and Technology Ministers' Statement](#).
- Switzerland noted it is co-organising a community lab session at RightsCon together with the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights on the B-Tech Project on June 7 at 16:00 UTC.
  - Participation in the session will be on a first-come first-serve basis.

- Finland and SU noted they will be submitting an IGF Open Forum session proposal on Internet Governance in the 2020s.
- Netherlands held a session for the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) Task Force on Freedom of Expression within the European Union, where it presented the FOC and received attention from the European Commission.
  - Netherlands proposed inviting a representative from the European Commission to FOC processes, especially regarding cybersecurity discussions.

**Action >>** Friends to consider next steps and discuss a model of addressing FOC policy of not issuing country-specific statements.

**Action >>** Friends to discuss inviting the European Commission to FOC processes.