

## Minutes of the Friends of the Chair Call #6 (August)

25 August 2021 at 14:00 UTC

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

### Housekeeping

- Recap of outstanding action items from the Friends of the Chair monthly call #5 (June) and the Strategy and Coordination Meeting (July)
  - Canada to share the revised stock language on privacy with FOC.
  - Finland and the SU to coordinate and prepare readouts of the FOC Africa Outreach events.
  - Members interested in leading the diplomatic network in Vienna are encouraged to reach out to the SU.
  - Denmark to share further information on the Tech for Democracy initiative.
  - Netherlands to share the suggestion of inviting a representative from the European Commission to FOC processes with the Friends in writing.
- In accordance with the Internal Program of Action, the SU:
  - Has hired a Project Assistant, Tea Piacun, who will be starting on 6 September.
  - Is finalising a media and social media strategies for the FOC, developed in cooperation with Independent Diplomat. The strategies will be shared with the FotC in September.
- Outlook for the month ahead
  - *Internal events (some of the Task Forces/Working Groups are still on summer hiatus):*
    - August 26 - Task Force on Digital Equality Monthly Call
    - September 29 - Friends of the Chair call
    - TBC September - T-FAIR monthly call
    - TBC September - Silicon Valley Working Group Monthly Call
    - TBC September - FOC-AN Call
  - *External events*
    - December 8, 7.30 UTC (preliminary schedule) - IGF FOC Open Forum on Internet Governance in the 2020s
  - *Deadlines*
    - [Questionnaire on country-specific statements](#) - COB Tuesday, August 31  
[The deadline for filling out the questionnaire has been extended to **September 24.**]
    - [Call for FO Conference session proposals](#) - COB Sunday, September 5
  - *Coming up in September / October:*
    - Program of Action (PoA) 2022 development process
    - Second draft of the Political Declaration

### Program of Action 2021

- **10th Anniversary**
  - In the remaining part of the year, Finland will be focusing on the FO Conference and High-level ministerial meeting, which includes the Political Declaration and the country-specific questionnaire process.
  - Political Declaration
    - Finland will be circulating the second draft of the Political Declaration by the beginning of October, taking into account Canada's plans for the PoA 2022.
  - FO Conference

- Finland thanked the members for submitting session proposals, and noted that it is currently examining the COVID situation and how it could affect the conference format.
- While the conference is envisioned to be in a hybrid format, Finland is also considering a completely virtual option, and evaluating the number of possible sessions.

**Action >>** Finland to share more information on the FO Conference format and number of sessions once available.

- **Diplomatic Coordination**
  - The SU is currently coordinating with all three active networks (Geneva, Paris, New York) to schedule post-summer check-in calls.
  - Geneva
    - Finland noted there is a new Finnish point of contact in Geneva.
- **Shaping Global Norms/ Advancing Priority Issues**
  - Disinformation (Finland/ UK)
    - FOC's Open Forum session proposal for the IGF has been accepted.
      - The event will explore FOC's key priorities, including disinformation, digital inclusion, and AI, and how governments translate and operationalise the joint statements on these themes.
      - SU will be in touch with the relevant governments envisioned to participate in the session.
  - Task Force on AI and Human Rights (T-FAIR) (Canada)
    - In coordination with the FOC Paris network, Canada plans to write a short statement ahead of the UNESCO General Conference in November in support of a human-rights approach to the UNESCO Recommendations for Ethics of AI.
      - The next T-FAIR call will be an opportunity to discuss the statement, along with T-FAIR's plans for the FO conference and next steps.
      - The mandate of T-FAIR is meant to end at the FO Conference.
  - Task Force on Digital Equality (Germany/ Ghana)
    - The Task Force is discussing next steps, and finalising its priorities.
    - An introductory call between the Task Force and the World Benchmarking Alliance is scheduled to take place on Thursday, August 26.
  - Cybersecurity, Challenges by authoritarian regimes, Stock language on privacy: N/A
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach**
  - Silicon Valley Working Group
    - The group held an informal in-person meeting in July in San Francisco, and will be officially reconvening in September.
  - Requests for collaboration
    - SU occasionally receives external requests for collaboration, for which the FOC does not have a protocol:
      - Friends agreed for the SU to bring these requests to the Chair to suggest a way forward. The Chair can then take them to the Friends if there is a need for consultation. SU would keep the Friends updated monthly during FotC calls.

## Chairship 2022

- Canada provided a brief overview of the PoA 2022, which will center around digital inclusion, with focus on connectivity, literacy, civic participation and safety.
  - Canada has been having bilateral discussions with partners and civil society organisations around the PoA 2022
  - The first draft will be circulated in early September to the FOC and the AN.
  - The objective is to have the PoA 2022 ready for the FO Conference.
  - Canada invited the Friends for feedback or in case of interest in leading on a specific topic in the PoA 2022.

## Advisory Network (AN)

- SU noted that the AN held their last monthly call in July, and will be reconvening in September.
- AN has submitted the Proactive Advice on Spyware and Surveillance Technologies to the FOC on 2 August.
- Finland is planning on joining the September AN call.

## AOB

- US raised the suggestion of creating a Task Force on Internet Shutdowns.
  - US is developing a concept note in coordination with AN representatives from AccessNow and Global Network Initiative, who would co-Chair the Task Force along with the US.
  - Its mandate would start this year and end in 2022, with a possibility to extend the mandate in agreement with Canada.
  - The Task Force would serve as a multilateral response mechanism as Internet shutdowns occur, building on FOC's [Joint Statement and Accompanying Good Practices for Government on State-Sponsored Network Disruptions](#) and the [G7 Foreign Development Ministers' Communique](#) on responding to shutdowns.
  - Objectives:
    - Share information on shutdowns in real-time and analysing shutdown trends
    - Share best-practices for engaging countries that impose shutdowns
    - Develop a repository of resources
    - Pending the country-specific questionnaire results, issue country-specific statements in response to escalating human rights abuses during Internet shutdowns.
  - The Task Force would include three lines of effort:
    - Knowledge-sharing
    - Rapid response
    - Advocacy
  - US encouraged Coalition members to join and help shape the Task Force.
  - Friends welcomed the creation of the Task Force.
    - Canada noted a key takeaway from T-FAIR was that having a good sense of objectives and timeframe that align lead to better results.
  - US noted potential collaboration with G7 members and the EU-US Trade and Technology Council.
- US has drafted a Joint Statement on Cuba Internet Restrictions along with Estonia, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands, which calls on the Cuban government to stop restrictions online and retract recent repressive cybersecurity legislation.
  - The statement would be disseminated at the next UN Human Rights Council and at the UN General Assembly in September.

- US noted this is not an FOC statement, but encouraged FOC members to sign on.  
*[The drafters have since determined not to proceed with issuing this joint statement at this time.]*
- UK raised the situation in Afghanistan, and the prevention of Internet shutdowns while mitigating surveillance risks.
  - UK has received a briefing from AccessNow on the risks and potential actions recommended for telecoms and governments to take.
    - UK proposed inviting AccessNow to brief the FOC and AN on the situation in Afghanistan.
    - US suggested going through the AN and having AccessNow propose holding the briefing for the FOC.
      - SU noted the AN would need to bring this up as proactive advice with consensus from the whole AN.

**Action >>** Members interested in signing on to the non-FOC Joint Statement on Cuba Internet Restrictions should do so by contacting the US by September 7 at [MasghatiN@state.gov](mailto:MasghatiN@state.gov). *[The drafters have since determined not to proceed with issuing this joint statement at this time.]*