

Friends of the Chair Call #9 (November)

Wednesday, 24 November 2021 at 14:00 UTC

Attending: Finland, Canada, Estonia, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, US; Support Unit [SU]

Housekeeping

- SU noted there were no outstanding action items from the Friends of the Chair monthly call #8 (October).
- SU announced the final list of members who have expressed interest to serve on the Friends of the Chair in 2022, which will also be confirmed at the SCM: Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ghana, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK and US [NB - France has since also expressed interest to join].
- SU provided updates on the Internal Program of Action.
 - Fundraising efforts for 2022 continue.
 - The FOC communications strategy has been shared with Members and its implementation has kicked off.
- FOC outlook and calendar
 - *Internal events*
 - 29 November, 12:00 - 13:30 UTC - Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM)
 - 29 November, 14:30 - 16:00 UTC - Joint FOC and FOC-AN Roundtable
 - 15 December - FOC-AN Call
 - 22 December (TBC) - Friends of the Chair call
 - TBD December - Task Force on Digital Equality Monthly Call
 - TBD December - T-FAIR monthly call
 - TBC December - Silicon Valley Working Group Monthly Call
 - *External events*
 - December 6-10 - IGF
 - December 8, 15:15 - 16:15 UTC - IGF FOC Open Forum on Internet Governance in the 2020s.
 - IGF Virtual Booth - showcasing 10 years of FOC Joint Statements.

Program of Action 2021

- 10th Anniversary:
 - Helsinki Declaration:
 - The final draft of the Helsinki Declaration has been shared with the FOC, and has been undergoing a silence procedure.
 - Finland noted it has received comments on the current draft from Germany and France, who:
 - Expressed concerns on the use of the word “authoritarian” in regards to using digital technologies for repressive and authoritarian purposes.
 - Expressed an interest regarding a stronger gender equality focus.
 - Finland noted it will not seek to reopen the text, and that the final version shared with the FOC will be endorsed on 3 December.
 - Upon receiving comments from Germany on the title of the document, Finland clarified that the final title will be “Freedom Online Coalition 10th Anniversary Helsinki Declaration”.

- Ministerial meeting:
 - The Ministerial meeting will be held virtually on 3 December, with 22 ministerial-level participants confirmed so far, and hosted by Finland's Foreign minister, Pekka Haavisto.
 - The ministerial meeting will be followed by a panel discussion with Mr. Uri Rosenthal and Ms. Ellonnai Hickok.
- FO Conference
 - The Conference registration page, programme, and all relevant information are publicly available on the www.freedomonlineconference.com.
 - SU noted it is coordinating with the organisers on sessions, has held two technical briefings for the panellists and moderators, and shared a Conference Communications Toolkit to support external communications.
 - Almost 500 participants registered for the Conference until now, expecting around 600 registrations. Registered participants include representatives from non-FOC member governments, including Taiwan.
- Diplomatic Coordination:
 - The SU noted that diplomatic networks are currently wrapping up their work for this year, with a cross-network meeting planned to be organised by the end of 2021, to be joined by leads and local network representatives.
 - Diplomatic network leads for 2022 are yet to be identified and Members were encouraged to indicate their interest in leading any of the networks in 2022.

Action>> Members to express interest in leading diplomatic networks in 2022.

- Shaping Global Norms/ Advancing Priority Issues:
 - Finland provided an update on the proposal for Country-specific statements:
 - There is a general consensus among Members for the proposed process to be accepted, with some reservations.
 - Further discussion on the proposal is planned for the SCM.
 - Canada provided an update on the Task Force on AI and Human Rights (T-FAIR):
 - T-FAIR is seeking mandate extension, and its priorities for 2022 are currently being discussed.
 - Germany has expressed the interest in chairing T-FAIR in 2022.
 - T-FAIR and the FOC Paris (UNESCO) diplomatic network held a coordination meeting on 8 November, ahead of the General Conference of UNESCO and the planned adoption of the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI.
 - Germany provided an update on the Task Force on Digital Equality:
 - Ghana plans to continue chairing the Task Force should their mandate be extended.
 - US provided an update on the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns:
 - The Task Force will officially be launching on 2 December, during the FO Conference, and will be co-chaired by Access Now and Global Network Initiative, alongside the US. The Task Force's working plan is planned to be adopted by the end of January 2022.
 - US encouraged G7 members, as well as other FOC members, to join the Task Force.

Action>> Members to express interest in joining the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns by Friday, 10 December.

- Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach:
 - SU provided an update on the Silicon Valley Working Group:
 - The group met on 10 November, where they discussed Denmark's Tech for Democracy 2021 conference.
 - Mr. Uri Rosenthal, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, provided a comprehensive overview of the history of the FOC.
 - The representatives from Zoom presented their approach to coercive government practices.

Chairship 2022

- PoA 2022
 - Canada noted it has received the comments on the first draft of the PoA 2022, and will soon be circulating the second draft.
 - FOC sub-entities 2022 mandate extensions
 - SU noted that all of the current FOC Sub-entities (T-FAIR, Task Force on Digital Equality, and the Silicon Valley Working Group) have requested mandate extensions for 2022, which were shared with the Friends of the Chair on 23 November, along with all of the groups' terms of reference.
 - The Friends of the Chair need to approve the mandate extensions of the FOC Sub-entities to continue with their work.
 - Provided there are no objections to the requests until Friday, 3 December, the SU will announce the mandate extension the following week.

Action>> Friends of the Chair to review mandate extension requests of T-FAIR, Task Force on Digital Equality, and Silicon Valley Working Group by COB Friday, 3 December.

Advisory Network (AN)

- Finland gave an update on the FOC-AN monthly call held on Wednesday, 17 November.
 - FOC-AN discussed the upcoming Joint Roundtable, the revision of the FOC's country-specific statements policy, the FO Conference, and the concerns raised by civil society organisations in the recent consultation on the "Alliance of the Future of the Internet", hosted by GNI on November 9.

AOB

- The European Union and the FOC:
 - US shared that it has received inquiries on FOC membership from the European Union, noting the need for possible amendments of the Terms of Reference.
 - Members agreed that the potential new membership shall be discussed at the Strategy and Coordination meeting on 29 November.