Friends of the Chair monthly call #7 (September)
Tuesday, 27 September, 14:00 UTC

Attending: Canada (Chair), Denmark, Estonia, Ghana, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, and US; FOC Support Unit (SU)

Welcome

Housekeeping
- Outstanding items from the Friends of the Chair monthly call #6 (August 2022)
    - Support Unit (SU) reiterated Canada's invitation to FOC members, who are also in the European Union (EU), to support with amending the Terms of Reference (TOR) Observer status language.
    - SU noted that the Global Digital Compact (GDC) Task Force and Working Group submissions have been extended to Friday, 7 October.
- Internal Program of Action / SU activities
    - SU noted that they are conducting a scoping trip to the US on Monday and Tuesday, 3 & 4 October, in preparation for the 2023 US Chairship.
- FOC calendar

Action >> Members are invited to provide Task Force and Working Group GDC input by **Friday, 7 October**.

Discussion Items

- Rome Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) agenda
    - CA noted that the UK will be hosting the Day 0 event.
        - UK noted that in addition to the formal Friends of the Chair (FotC) meeting, they will be hosting an informal segment.
    - Canada provided a run through of Day 1 and Day 2 of the draft Rome SCM agenda, and noted that the first draft of the Ottawa Agenda has been circulated to the FOC and the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) for comments.
        - Canada noted they are aiming to have the Ottawa Agenda signed at a Ministerial-level event in December 2022.
        - Canada noted there will be a flash session on various democracy and technology initiatives and expressed interest in having an FOC-AN member moderate the discussion.
            - Canada noted they will reach out to FotC Members leading on such initiatives to invite them to discuss their work.
    - US expressed their interest in hosting a discussion around the development of Surveillance Principles at the Rome SCM.
        - US provided further context: On December 2021 at the Summit for Democracy, USAID announced that they would work to develop principles around how governments use surveillance technologies that align with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
            - US noted that Canada put the development of the principles into the FOC workstream.

- ■ US noted their readiness to discuss the set of voluntary principles within the FOC, and expressed interest in having it prepared as a deliverable for the next Summit for Democracy.
- ■ Canada noted that there is flexibility in the agenda to include a session to discuss the Surveillance Principles.

Action>> FotC to designate one representative each to attend the informal segment of Day 0 at the Rome SCM.

- FOC in-country engagement
  - ○ Switzerland provided background on establishing in-country working groups idea, put forth earlier in the year by the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB).
  - ○ Switzerland suggested facilitating in-country discussions among FOC Member embassies and noted that creating local FOC Working Groups could allow for greater engagement with local stakeholders, however, they also pointed at the possible risks of exposing local partners, noting in particular the arrest of the Director of the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business.
    - ■ Canada noted that following the regional consultations held this summer, there has been an interest by such partners in this kind of interaction with FOC.
    - ■ US and Denmark expressed support for such engagement but are conscious of capacity restraints.
    - ■ SU suggested that as part of the development of country-specific statements, in-country engagement can be identified as one of the recommendations, in lieu of a formal structure in the Stockholm ToR.
  - ○ Canada noted the toolkit for FOC members to use internally, and for bilateral and multilateral engagement, that they have developed with support from the FOC-AN. Canada noted the toolkit will be shared with the FOC shortly and encouraged Members to pilot it with their missions.

Program of Action 2022
- **Shaping Global Norms**
  - ○ Capital-level coordination
    - ■ Canada noted they co-hosted a UN General Assembly (UNGA) high-level week side-event with the Netherlands on "Upholding Democracy and Human Rights in the Face of Rising Disinformation" that also featured panellists from the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) and International IDEA.
    - ■ Canada confirmed that an FOC Ministerial-level Meeting will be held in December and that further details will be shared soon.
  - ○ Diplomatic network
    - ■ Canada highlighted the upcoming side-event taking place in Geneva on the margins of the 51st HRC.
      - ● Canada noted that the event, co-organised by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Global Partners Digital (GPD), will be a roundtable on digital technologies and non-discrimination under international law on Wednesday, 5 October, 13:00 UTC.
      - ● Canada noted that in-person invites have been sent to Geneva representatives, and virtual invites sent to Capital.
- **Promoting Multi-stakeholder Engagement**
  - ○ Task Forces / Working Group updates *[Please note these updates were contributed by the SU in writing.]*

- - - Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TF-AIR) (lead: Germany)
        - TF-AIR is currently drafting its input to the GDC.
      - Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE) (lead: Ghana, FOC-AN)
        - The Task Force is planning their session on gendered disinformation, which will take place during Day 2 of the SCM in Rome.
        - TFDE is providing input to the Chair on a number of matters, including the GDC survey.
        - TFDE is co-organising a workshop with global South stakeholders as part of the Freedom Online South initiative with IDRC, GPD, GAC, and the US.
      - Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS) (lead: US, FOC-AN)
        - The TFIS Resources and Best Practices for Diplomatic Engagement on Internet Shutdowns document has been circulated to FOC.
        - TFIS has been in touch with the UK on the Summit for Democracy Cohort they are leading with Estonia and Access Now. As each entity continues to lay out plans for the coming months, TFIS plans to continue coordinating to ensure that efforts are complementary.
        - TFIS is drafting its input to the GDC.
        - The TFIS bimonthly meeting was held on 19 September and a number of #KeepItOn community members were invited. The meeting focused on updates and information sharing.
      - Silicon Valley Working Group (SVWG) (lead: Canada)
        - The Working Group's monthly meeting will be held as a hybrid event on 28 September (*please note the meeting has passed]*, which hosted Discord to discuss their approach to trust and safety.
        - *Note from the SU: We invite Members to express interest in leading the SVWG in 2023. If no Members are able to lead, the mandate of the sub-entity will not be extended.*
          - *Members can consider co-chairing with the FOC-AN.*
      - SU has reached out to all sub-entities to inquire about mandate extension requests, which will be presented to the FotC at the Rome SCM.
  - Advisory Network
    - Canada noted that FOC-AN is developing a proactive advice outlining key concerns and themes regarding online freedom in Iran and are highlighting relevant FOC language.

- **Ramping up Advocacy, Communication, and Outreach**
  - Canada noted that the [Regional Consultation reports](#) have been published on the FOC Website.

Chairship / Program of Action 2023
- **US** to provide update
  - N/A