Friends of the Chair Meeting #9
Wednesday, 7 December 2022

Attended: Canada (Chair), Denmark, Finland, France, Ghana, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, US; Support Unit (SU)

Welcome

- Support Unit (SU) noted that this is the last Friends of the Chair (FotC) meeting under Canada's Chairship, with the next call taking place in January 2023 under the US Chairship.

Housekeeping

- Outstanding items from the FotCmonthly call #8 (October 2022)
    - SU confirmed the incoming FotC group for 2023 (Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK).
    - SU noted the [Stockholm Terms Of Reference](#) (TOR) Observer status language amendments successfully passed in November, which now allows state or non-state entities to apply for Observer status.
- Membership Updates
    - SU announced Chile has officially become the 35th member of the FOC.
- Internal Program of Action (PoA) 2023 and SU activities
    - SU highlighted it has been working with the US to draft an Internal PoA 2023, which outlines SU's activities and complements the PoA 2023.
        - SU noted that, provided there are no objections, the Internal PoA 2023 will be the basis upon which the mandate of the SU is considered as renewed to allow implementation of the PoA 2023 activities starting in January 2023.
            - FotC submitted no objections.
    - SU noted the Communications Strategy and Workplan for 2023 are currently under review by the US, and will be circulated to the FotC shortly.
        - SU noted it is currently developing the FOC Digital Hub, to be launched early 2023, which will act as a central repository for Coalition documents, and feature internal news items and events to build upon internal communications efforts.
    - Fundraising update
- FOC calendar
    - Internal events
        - Thursday, 8 December - Paris diplomatic network/ FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) briefing on UNESCO's Global Conference. *[Please note this event has already taken place.]*
            - SU noted UNESCO is developing a model regulatory framework for platform regulation and hosting a conference on 21-23 February.
            - SU noted that UNESCO contacted the SU to encourage FOC member involvement in developing the regulatory framework.
        - Wednesday, 14 December - Virtual Discussion on the US Chairship and the draft PoA 2023.
            - US noted the event is an opportunity for members to increase awareness of the FOC domestically and encouraged members to invite representatives from development agencies, noting that the US is integrating the US Agency for International Development (USAID).
            - US outlined the agenda, including remarks from the White House and the Department of State, information sharing on the status of the draft PoA 2023, and a Q&A opportunity for attending FOC member representatives.

- - ○ US noted the Q&A segment is an opportunity to provide high-level interventions and pose any questions to the US as incoming Chair.
  - ○ External events
    - ■ Wednesday, 7 December - Atlantic Council (AC) session about the FOC: "The Democratic Tech Alliance You've Never Heard of: How the FOC Can Live Up to its Promise." *[Please note this event has already taken place.]*
      - ● SU highlighted the report published by AC, "[An introduction to the Freedom Online Coalition](#)", which provides an overview of the FOC and noted that it will likely become a resource for the community.
        - ○ SU highlighted that the report contained inaccuracies, which the SU will be responding to before the end of the year.
    - ■ Monday, 23 January - FOC, Media Freedom Coalition (MFC), European Union (EU), and the Partnership for Information and Democracy proposed working-level meeting.
      - ● SU noted the FOC was invited to participate and is looking to the current and incoming Chairs for guidance about how to engage.

Action>> FotC to flag any inaccuracies to the [Atlantic Council's report](#) for the SU to integrate into its response by **COB Thursday, 22 December.**

Discussion Items

- ● Red-line edits on the second draft PoA 2023 ahead of final silence procedure
  - ○ SU noted the final comments have been submitted and are being consolidated.
    - ■ Once the document is finalised, it will be shared with the FotC, who will have two days to review, after which the document will undergo a silence procedure of five business days with the full Coalition.
  - ○ Finland noted the strengthened ties to development programming and cooperation in the draft PoA 2023 and asked what kind of development role the US envisions the FOC having.
    - ■ US highlighted the development component emerged from consultations with the Internet freedom community about the kind of tangible impact the FOC can make.
    - ■ US noted this as an opportunity for FOC members to coordinate funding and resourcing to members of the Internet freedom community, and to encourage non-FOC countries to join the FOC.
    - ■ US encouraged FotC to engage their development agencies.
    - ■ US noted more information will be announced in January, 2023.
  - ○ Denmark underlined the need to establish a balance between looking inwards and outwards when addressing the misuse of digital technologies, and encouraged continuing this discussion.
    - ■ Denmark highlighted the activity that seeks to incorporate digital technologies into the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, and noted the draft PoA 2023 aligns with the Tech for Democracy initiative.
      - ● US noted they are interested in including the UPR process, and that such an inclusion will require a ToR amendment.
  - ○ Canada noted their appreciation that the topic of digital inclusion was included in the draft PoA 2023.
- ● Potential ToR amendments in 2023
  - ○ US noted they seek to amend the ToR early in their Chairship, and shared a list of the proposed amendments.
- ● Diplomatic networks in 2023
  - ○ SU introduced the question of the value of the Vienna diplomatic network in the PoA 2023, considering its inactivity.

- - US underlined the focus of the 2023 Chairship is on strengthening diplomatic networks, highlighting their significance as vehicles to carry forward the norm-setting vision of the FOC and ensure the FOC is reflected in UN processes.
    - US highlighted they intend to invest in helping networks integrate the FOC into their work, noting their plans to fund a Diplomatic Network Coordinator position in the SU.
  - Netherlands agreed on the need to re-evaluate the networks, and noted the lack of effectiveness from the New York network.
    - Netherlands highlighted the importance of having an FOC approach to the UN Ad Hoc Committee cybercrime convention meetings, taking place in Vienna and New York, and taking the locations into consideration when thinking about diplomatic network resourcing in 2023.
      - Canada noted that diplomatic networks have been most useful when a specific process was identified, and noted they are not suggesting reshaping diplomatic networks in the ToR.
  - UK suggested discussing with FOC member representatives from the Vienna network about their ability and capacity for FOC engagement.
    - Canada noted there was a sense of capacity limitations in previous consultations with their Vienna representatives.

Action>> US encouraged the FotC to reach out to their respective representatives in Vienna to inquire about the value of the Vienna diplomatic network, and to note any reflections by **COB Wednesday, 14 December** to the US with a CC to the SU.

- - Task Force / Working Group mandate extensions
  - SU noted each sub-entity received one expression of interest to lead:
    - UK submitted an expression of interest to lead the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS).
    - Ghana renewed their expression of interest to lead the Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE).
    - Germany renewed their expression of interest to lead the Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TFAIR).
    - Canada renewed their expression of interest to lead the Silicon Valley Working Group (SVWG).
  - SU invited FotC members to come forward with any additional expressions of interest to lead a sub-entity.
  - Denmark noted they are considering integrating an action coalition from Tech for Democracy as a sub-entity in 2023.
  - **FotC decided to extend the mandates of all sub-entities.**

Program of Action 2022

- - Shaping Global Norms
  - Capital-level coordination
    - Canada confirmed the Ottawa Agenda will be launched the third week of January, 2023, noting that a pre-recorded handover between the US and Canada is planned, accompanied by in-person events in Ottawa and in Geneva.
      - Canada encouraged members to engage on social media about the Ottawa Agenda during the launch, noting that a communications plan would be shared soon.
      - Canada noted the integration of additional language related to gender and addressed red-line edits.

- Canada highlighted the final draft of the Ottawa Agenda will be shared with the FotC shortly, after which it will undergo a 5 business days-long silence procedure with the whole Coalition.
- Canada highlighted the End-of-Year report, which summarises the work of the Coalition in 2022, will be published in December.

[Please note the following written updates have been added to the minutes by the SU.]

  - Diplomatic networks
    - Paris
      - The network held a virtual briefing and discussion with the FOC-AN on UNESCO's Global Conference: Internet for Trust - Regulating Digital Platforms for Information as a Public Good.
        - FOC-AN presented their perspective on UNESCO processes 2023 and exchanged views with FOC members based in Paris to help equip delegations for the upcoming year.
- Promoting Multi-stakeholder Engagement : FOC sub-entities / FOC Advisory Network (AN)
  - Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE)
    - The last TFDE call took place in December, where the group discussed their Task Force renewal document and the Work Plan 2023.
  - Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TFAIR)
    - The last TFAIR call took place in November, in which the group underlined the outputs of the Task Force, including the TFAIR AI session at the Internet Governance Forum.
    - Germany, T-FAIR lead, also noted a change in their POC.
  - Task Force on Internet Shutdown (TFIS)
    - The last call took place in November, where FOC/FOC-AN members and Global Network Initiative members shared information on opportunities for bilateral engagement at IGF and deliberated the use of limited Internet shutdowns in occasions when they may be justifiable.
  - Silicon Valley Working Group (SV WG)
    - The last call took place in December and featured discussions from the US about their Chairship plans and Canada provided an overview of their Chairship activities.
  - Advisory Network
    - The new FOC-AN co-Chairs for 2023, [Elonnai Hickok and Tatiana Tropina](), have been confirmed.
    - US and Canada participated in the last FOC-AN monthly call, where the FOC-AN suggested holding a learning call for FOC members on the situation in Iran at the beginning of 2023.
    - The final FOC-AN monthly call in 2022 will be held on Wednesday, 21 December.
- Ramping up Advocacy, Communication, and Outreach
  - Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns in Iran (Joint Statement on Iran)
    - The JS on Internet Shutdowns in Iran received significant media coverage, specifically from Persian-language outlets, including broadcast news segments from the BBC and Iran International TV referencing the statement, with media publications circulated widely on social media.
    - SU received a media request for a broadcast interview, which has been shared with Access Now as a co-Chair of TFIS.
    - The JS on Internet Shutdowns in Iran has been referenced by the Media Freedom Coalition in a [statement]() expressing concern over the repression of freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly.

AOB

- Canada reflected on the outputs of their Chairship, and noted when FOC members focused on aspects of the PoA 2022 that aligned with their domestic priorities and which they could lead on, this helped deliver on the Coalition's commitments.
    - Canada encouraged FotC to focus on activities from the PoA 2023 that align with their domestic priorities to help advance the Coalition's goals.
    - US encouraged FotC to reach out if they are interested in leading on any activities in the PoA 2023.
- Canada thanked FotC and SU for their work.