Friends of the Chair Meeting #2
Tuesday, 28 February 2023

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

Housekeeping

- Support Unit (SU) noted key updates regarding FOC Membership and Observership:
    - Taiwan passed silence procedure and became the first FOC Observer;
        - SU are finalising guidance on Observer participation in the Coalition.
    - Iceland submitted a letter of intent as part of their FOC membership application *[The letter was circulated to FotC members for a 30-day silence procedure on 1 March. The deadline to submit comments is 30 March].*
- SU highlighted that the first iteration of an internal bi-monthly newsletter will be circulated to the FOC in the coming weeks as an effort to resolve information gaps between capital and diplomatic networks.
- SU noted the following internal deadlines:
    - 9 March: Deadline to break silence on the final draft of the statement to be delivered on behalf of the FOC by the US Delegation at the Human Rights Council 52nd Session.
    - 10 March: Deadline for FOC Chairship expressions of interest.
    - 16 March: Deadline to complete the FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) [Registration and Travel Survey](#).
        - US encouraged members to register and noted opportunities for members to use the days following the SCM to attend Summit for Democracy (S4D) events and engage in bilats.
            - FOC representatives attending the SCM are invited to the US-hosted S4D tech event on Thursday, 30 March. More information, including the official invite, as well as timing, location, and how to register, will be shared shortly.
- In terms of upcoming events, SU noted the Silicon Valley Working Group (SV WG), in collaboration with the European Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ECNL), is hosting a welcome breakfast on 21 March for gaming companies attending the 2023 Game Developers Conference, and will include a discussion on best practices for meaningful stakeholder engagement to reduce online harm.
    - Invitations have been shared with the broader FOC.

Action>> FOC Members to [register](#) for the upcoming Strategy and Coordination Meeting in Washington DC (27-28 March) by **COB Thursday, 16 March**.

Discussion Items
Outreach strategy and identifying FOC Chair 2024

- SU highlighted the list of outreach countries shared with FotC members in December 2022, and noted the previously identified request to FotC members to support the US with outreach efforts.
    - SU provided the following membership updates:
        - Slovakia recently joined the Coalition;
        - Taiwan became an Observer;
        - Iceland submitted a letter of intent to become a member; and
        - SU is following up with Portugal.

- - US have demarched all capitals that are FOC governments, as well as some prospective member governments.
  - FOC Chairship 2024 outreach
    - SU noted that New Zealand inquired about having a follow-up call about the 2024 Chairship and welcomed bilateral engagement with past Chairs to better understand what the Chairship would look like.
    - US noted their goal is to minimise the resources the 2024 Chair will need to put in by focusing on the Coalition's capacity building this year.
    - Netherlands noted they have looked at members from the global South as potential 2024 Chairs and particularly considered Chile.
      - Netherlands acknowledged Chile recently became an FOC member and that asking them to Chair in 2024 may be ambitious, also noting that they have an ambassadorial connection with Chile and can use that as an opportunity for outreach.
    - Netherlands noted they have the possibility to be 2024 Chair, but prefer another member to Chair.
    - Finland noted they can share their experience as Chair on a call with New Zealand or other potential Chairs.
    - SU noted the following members as potential candidates for outreach for the 2024 FOC Chairship: Argentina, Australia, Chile, Georgia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, and New Zealand.

Guiding Principles on Government Use of Surveillance Technologies

- US noted the final draft would be circulated Tuesday, 28 February for members to provide red-line edits by COB Thursday, 3 March.
- US highlighted that during the S4D there will not be an opportunity for negotiation of the document.
- US emphasised that the guiding principles document is voluntary, nonbinding, and particularly scoped to the three areas of concern listed as the scope of the document.
  - US emphasised that the focus of the document is on the misuse and abuse of technology, not the technology itself.
- Germany and Finland queried whether the guiding principles are intended to be a Coalition document or a leaders-level S4D document.
  - *Please note the following information was shared by the US via email:* "From our understanding, the only leaders' level Summit for Democracy (S4D) deliverable is the Summit Declaration. We do not believe that other S4D deliverables need leader-level approval, but we leave it up to each individual country to make that decision as needed."
  - US noted the process to adopt the Guiding Principles is abiding by the Stockholm Terms of Reference (ToR).
- US noted they may have an event on Monday, 27 March to publicly launch the Guiding Principles during the SCM, but this is still under discussion.
- US affirmed the Guiding Principles are an S4D deliverable and will be branded as an FOC document, noting that other Summit participants will have the opportunity to endorse it.

Program of Action 2023
- US provided updates on the FOC Funding Coordination Group (FCG), noting they will be reviving the FCG, with plans to relaunch at the SCM.
  - US noted there will be opportunities to discuss the FCG during the SCM, noting that virtual attendance for this discussion will most likely be available.

- US highlighted the previous discussions and ideas from the Rome SCM about a donor coordination task force and noted they would look to apply them under the FCG.
- US will be launching the FCG in collaboration with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).
- US noted two points in their vision for the FCG:
  - Focus on strategic prioritisation of donor efforts on Internet freedom and digital democracy issues, particularly highlighting opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing; and
  - Negotiate a set of donor principles for the digital age that will articulate the guardrails for what rights-respecting donor investment looks like in the digital space.
    - US clarified that the principles would be drafted by the FCG and then shared with the broader coalition for review.
- US noted a concept note for the Funding Coordination Group will be circulated shortly. *[Please note the concept note has been circulated for an expedited (5-day) silence procedure with the FOC on 7 March. Once the silence procedure ends, the FCG will be opened up for membership.]*
- US presented the agenda for the upcoming SCM in March, and noted the virtual Friends of the Chair monthly call ahead of the SCM scheduled for 22 March will stand.
  - US suggested a 30 min FotC meeting in-person during the SCM, noting that time can be spent discussing one or two specific topics.
  - US invited members to suggest any topics they would like to raise.
  - SCM meetings will take place in two separate locations: the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and the Atlantic Council.
    - US noted the Atlantic Council will give a presentation, and later the FOC and FOC-AN will have a closed door, Joint Roundtable session.
  - US noted the reception will be hosted by Google and TechChange.
- US provided an update on the diplomatic networks, noting the Geneva diplomatic network recently had their working-level kick-off meeting.
  - US highlighted the communications challenges between capital and diplomatic networks that the Geneva representatives noted during their working-level meeting.
  - The New York diplomatic network has not launched yet.
  - Canada will continue to lead the Paris diplomatic network and FOC engagement with UNESCO.
- Canada provided an update on the FOC's Global Digital Compact (GDC) submission.
  - A rewrite of some Task Force and Working Group proposals was needed to better align the submission with general FOC language.
  - SU noted that based on precedence, if no original language is present then the document can be immediately submitted, and if there is original language then the document will need to go to the FotC for review and silence procedure.
    - Canada noted the GDC submission is primarily pre-approved FOC language, and any unique language contributed by Task Forces and the Working Group is clearly noted and not binding to governments.
  - Netherlands queried whether the pre-approved language addresses all eight topics identified in the GDC and whether the FOC will have any other contributions under the other topics.
    - Canada noted they identified existing FOC statements that pertained to as many of the GDC topics and used the language to develop the submission.
    - Canada noted there will be other opportunities throughout the GDC process to shape language.
  - Canada noted the final draft will be shared with the FotC soon.

AOB

- UK queried whether the process for country-specific statements is codified, and asked FotC members about domestic Internet shutdown policies and whether it is something they have considered.
  - UK invited FotC members to contact them if they are interested in further discussing the topic.
- Canada noted a change of POC.