Freedom Online Coalition End of Year Report 2023

Highlighting the activities and outputs of the Freedom Online Coalition in 2023, under the Chairship of the United States.

FREEDOM ONLINE COALITION

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Letter from the 2023 Chair of the FOC

Distinguished Members of the Freedom Online Coalition, the FOC Advisory Network, colleagues,

The United States was honored to serve as Chair of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) in 2023, a pivotal year for human rights in the digital age.

Since the FOC was founded in 2011, the United States has supported the FOC's mission to promote and protect the Internet's defining features and principles: open, free, global, interoperable, reliable, and secure. As part of the first Summit for Democracy in December 2021, President Biden announced that the U.S. would "deepen the Coalition's diplomatic efforts to address the challenges and opportunities of digital technologies," reinforced by Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's June 2022 announcement of the U.S. chairship for the following year.

Our chairship goal was to bolster existing efforts where the FOC adds unique value, including by increasing ties between FOC multilateral policy development and country-level activities and to ramp-up outreach efforts that maximize the Coalition's reach and effectiveness.

Building on the legacy of previous FOC chairs, the U.S. further advanced four priority policy areas: promoting and protecting fundamental freedoms, countering and building resilience to the rise of digital authoritarianism and the misuse of technologies, advancing norms, principles, and safeguards for artificial intelligence (AI) based on human rights, and strengthening digital inclusion.

Under the U.S. chairship, the 38 FOC member governments, observer, and 30 advisory network experts accomplished the following:

- Released the Guiding Principles on Government Use of Surveillance Technologies.
- Published the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age.
- Issued a Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections.
- Convened an FOC Ministerial Meeting, bringing 11 Ministers and 6 Deputy and Under-Secretary representatives from FOC and additional key G77 partners, the ITU Secretary General, and 7 Executive Level representatives, on Advancing the 2030 Agenda through Inclusive and Rights-Respecting Digital Policy on the margins of the 78th United Nations General Assembly.
- Strengthened the network of FOC government diplomats in Geneva and New York.
- Hosted 16 panels or sessions during or on the margins of multistakeholder conferences and meetings held in Costa Rica, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- Improved the FOC's operating mechanics by updating the FOC Terms of Reference, and
- Welcomed Slovakia, Iceland, and South Korea as members and Taiwan as an observer to the Coalition and made in roads with potential additional new members.

The FOC's Support Unit is instrumental to the Coalition's success. Thank you to Lea Kasper, Global Partners Digital's Executive Director, for your leadership of the Support Unit since the FOC's founding, and to Nick Powell, Zora Gouhary, Nusa Tomic, and Nikole Farler for your tireless efforts.

We further thank the members of the FOC Steering Committee, formerly known as the "Friends of the Chair," for their advice and support in successfully implementing the 2023 Program of Action.

And finally, we express our gratitude to the Canadian Government for its leadership in 2022 and welcome the Netherlands' chairship in 2024. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the year ahead!

Sincerely,

U.S. Freedom Online Coalition Team

FOC Mission & Program of Action 2023

FOC Mission

The FOC is a group of countries (each a Member) committed to the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to upholding their respective obligations under the international human rights treaties to which they are a party. The FOC believes that the human rights that people have offline must also be protected online. The Coalition serves as a coordinating body that advances cross-regional diplomacy and commits to working together, and with all others who share these views, including through multistakeholder engagement, to support Internet freedom and protect human rights online worldwide. The FOC aims to be a proactive coalition that works with all stakeholders to ensure Internet freedom issues are on the policy agenda as a way to drive concrete policy changes and outcomes, and shape global norms to promote a rules-based, democratic, and inclusive world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts, with the goal of ensuring everyone, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, indigeneity, language, religion, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or other factors, can fully enjoy their human rights online.

Program of Action 2023

The Program of Action (PoA) 2023 outlines the FOC's priority areas and activities, and was developed by the United States as the FOC 2023 Chair, following consultations with FOC and FOC Advisory Network Members. The outlined activities were carried out over the course of the United States' term as Chair.

In 2023, as per the PoA 2023, the FOC focused on the following goals and policy areas:

Goals:
- Bolster existing efforts where the FOC adds unique value;
- Increase ties between FOC multilateral policy development and country-level activities, including both diplomatic and development assistance activities; and
- Strengthen and expand the FOC through improved operating mechanics and outreach efforts.

Policy Areas:
- Promoting and protecting fundamental freedoms;
- Countering growing authoritarianism and the misuse of digital technologies;
- Advancing norms, principles, and safeguards for AI; and
- Strengthening digital inclusion.

Updates to Procedures, Membership, and Other Mechanisms

Terms of Reference

In 2023, in line with the activities under the Program of Action to strengthen internal FOC processes, the U.S., as the FOC Chair 2023, proposed to review and update the Stockholm Terms of Reference (ToR) in a proactive effort to improve clarity around how the Coalition functions, i.e. to strengthen and streamline the Coalition's existing operations and way of work for added value.

To support the Coalition's mission statement, Members agreed to prioritize three primary working methods:

1. **Information and knowledge sharing**, including through facilitating learning calls, monitoring and research activities, voluntary funding coordination, and sharing best-practices and guidelines on relevant policy and issue areas, as well as strengthening cooperation and coordination with outside stakeholders, where appropriate;

2. **Diplomatic coordination**, including through developing joint positions and strategies on thematic topics, and coordinating rapid responses to human rights violations; and

3. **Advocacy**, including through issuing of Coalition statements and other outputs, directly engaging in multilateral fora, facilitating joint demarches, and hosting and participating in internal and external events.

The implementation of these working methods will adhere to the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

In addition to revising the working methods of the FOC, as well as introducing technical edits to clarify existing processes, a number of substantive revisions were made to help streamline and strengthen the Coalition's existing operations and way of work for added value. These include: ensuring that principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility are reflected in the operations and structure of all FOC mechanisms throughout the ToR; strengthening member accountability; adding a provision to enable a Troika model, in line with the PoA 2023, to facilitate easier coordination between past, current and future Chairs and to ensure continuity in the FOC's work; emphasising that the FOC strives to operate by consensus; as well as clarifying that the scope of the FOC's advocacy goes beyond issuing statements and may include other outputs.

Membership

In 2023, the FOC was joined by three states - Slovakia, Iceland, and the Republic of Korea. In addition to gaining three Members, bringing the number of FOC Member States to 38, the Coalition was joined by its first Observer - Taiwan.

Funding Coordination Group

In April, the FOC revitalised the FCG, co-Chaired by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC). The FCG is a multinational and multistakeholder coordination, strategic planning, and global norms setting mechanism focused on bridging foreign policymaking and international development through harnessing opportunities for closer collaboration, and enhancing knowledge sharing and strategic coordination.

FOC Sub-Entities

The FOC's Task Forces on Internet Shutdowns, Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, and Digital Equality, in addition to the Silicon Valley Working Group, had their mandates extended into 2023. In August, the FOC established a new Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online. Read more on p.15.

Advocacy

In 2023, Coalition Member States spearheaded the development of language on key priority areas including government use of surveillance technologies, the use of Internet shutdowns during electoral periods, and donor principles for states with development and assistance programming. The Coalition's consensus-based outputs welcomed input from the FOC's observer, in addition to civil society, academia, and private sector representatives through the FOC Advisory Network, and from external stakeholders.

The FOC and its sub-entities hosted and participated in numerous panel sessions and workshops to further raise awareness of the FOC's goals and values, highlighting key outputs and exploring methods to address trends, challenges, and opportunities related to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Statements & Other Written Outputs

FOC Joint Statement Presented at the 52nd UN HRC session, March 2023

The delegation of the U.S. delivered a joint statement comprising existing FOC language, reiterating the FOC's commitments on behalf of the FOC membership and noting the Coalition's priority policy areas during the 52nd session of the UN HRC.

Guiding Principles on Government Use of Surveillance Technologies, March 2023

The U.S. led the development and launch of voluntary and non-legally binding Guiding Principles that illustrate how governments can maintain their commitment to respect and protect democratic principles, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, consistent with their international obligations and commitments, in the responsible use of surveillance technology. In addition to Coalition Member States, the Guiding Principles were endorsed by the following participants of the second Summit for Democracy: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Colombia, Ecuador, Greece, Kosovo, Malta, North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

FOC Joint Statement on the Heightened Risks Associated with Surveillance Technologies and the Importance of Safeguards in the Use of these Tools Presented at the 54th UN HRC session, October 2023

During the 54th session of the UN HRC, the U.S. presented the Joint Statement on the Heightened Risks Associated with Surveillance Technologies and the Importance of Safeguards in the Use of these Tools. The statement builds upon the FOC's Guiding Principles on Government Use of Surveillance Technologies, and calls on governments to take steps to ensure the use of these technologies is lawful and responsible, in accordance with states' domestic law and international obligations and commitments.

Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections, October 2023

The FOC issued a Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections during a hybrid launch-event at the 2023 Internet Governance Forum in Kyoto, Japan. The development of the statement was led by the co-Chairs of the FOC's Task Force on Internet Shutdowns, and condemns intentional measures taken by states to undermine an open, free, global and interoperable Internet and digital communications platforms through shutdowns and network disruptions before, during, and following electoral periods. Through the statement, the FOC calls on all states to commit publicly to refrain from restricting the Internet and digital communications amid electoral periods.

Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age, October 2023

The FOC published the "Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age" during a hybrid launch-event at the 2023 Internet Governance Forum in Kyoto, Japan. The Donor Principles call on governments with international development and assistance programming to advance an affirmative, rights-respecting agenda to promote a digital future that upholds the commitment to 'do no harm.' They are driven by the ideal that donors should invest in digital technologies and data collection only when it is possible to protect against their potential misuse, and when procedures are put in place to facilitate this protection. The development of the principles was led by the co-Chairs of the FOC FCG, with input from the Coalition's Member States, the Advisory Network, and external stakeholders via a public consultation, facilitated by the SU.

Participants at the 2023 Global IGF session "Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age: Turning Principles into Action", in Kyoto, Japan.

Endorsements

FOC endorsement of the MFC Statement on Transnational Repression of Journalists and Media Workers, September 2023

The FOC expressed its endorsement for the Media Freedom Coalition's Statement on Transnational Repression of Journalists and Media Workers, underscoring the Coalition's commitment to ensuring an open online civic space and protecting human rights online, including freedom of expression and privacy rights.

Submissions

FOC submission to the UNESCO consultation on digital platform regulation, January 2023

The Coalition submitted procedural input into the consultation process which included existing, agreed-upon FOC language.

FOC submission to the Global Digital Compact, March 2023

The FOC submitted existing, consensus FOC language, coupled with input that was received from the FOC's multistakeholder sub-entities, developed by FOC Member States and the Advisory Network, during Canada's Chairship in 2022.

Multistakeholder Events, Panel Sessions & Workshops

Silicon Valley Working Group Welcome Breakfast - 2023 Game Developers Conference | San Francisco, United States - March 2023

The Silicon Valley Working Group, in collaboration with the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), hosted a welcome breakfast to kick-off the 2023 Game Developers Conference in San Francisco. The event featured a multistakeholder workshop inviting representatives attending the GDC,

local industry, civil society, and tech policy stakeholders to discuss online harms and what companies can do to make their products and platform safer for users.

Live from the Freedom Online Coalition: How the FOC Works for People Around the World | Washington D.C., United States - March 2023

During the FOC's first Strategy & Coordination Meeting of 2023, the U.S. together with the Atlantic Council's DFRLab hosted a session featuring opening remarks from Wendy Sherman, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, in addition to a multistakeholder panel discussion on the state of play in the digital technology space, exploring the opportunities and challenges, and reflecting on the role of the FOC in the digital environment.

RightsCon 2023 | San José, Costa Rica - June 2023

The FOC hosted multistakeholder panel discussions and meetings during the 2023 RightsCon Summit in San José, Costa Rica. The Summit, which convened a diverse group of stakeholders from around the world, provided an opportunity for the FOC to highlight ongoing activities. Sessions led or participated in by the FOC and the FOC Advisory Network included:

- **Promoting a Positive Vision for the Internet and Digital Technologies through the FOC**
  The U.S. brought together government and civil society representatives in a panel session underscoring the FOC's work to promote a positive vision for the Internet and digital technologies.

- **Addressing Internet Disruption Through the FOC's Task Force on Internet Shutdowns**
  The FOC Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS), co-chaired by the United Kingdom, Access Now, and the Global Network Initiative (GNI), hosted an in-person meeting at RightsCon to gather input on the mandate and future focus areas of TFIS.

- **Strategies to Limit the Use of AI-Driven Technologies for Repressive and Authoritarian Purposes**
  The FOC Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TFAIR), co-chaired by Germany and ICNL, hosted a hybrid panel session which outlined concerning trends in the misuse of AI-driven technologies, explored strategies of limiting and addressing these trends, in addition to an overview of TFAIR's core areas of work.

- **Revisiting the FOC's Working Group on "An Internet Free and Secure"**
  The U.S., alongside Advisory Network representatives, participated in a civil society organised panel session revisiting the activities of the FOC's Working Group "An Internet Free and Secure", providing an opportunity to reflect on the Working Group's contributions and outputs.

UN Human Rights Council 53rd Session Side-Event: Using the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to Promote Fundamental Freedoms and Prevent the Misuse of Technology | Geneva, Switzerland - June 2023

On the margins of the 53rd UN Human Rights Council session, the U.S. hosted a side-event "Using the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) to Promote Fundamental Freedoms and Prevent the Misuse of Technology," co-sponsored by the governments of Costa Rica, Maldives, Netherlands, and Switzerland. The event brought together governments, civil society, and private sector representatives, and featured a multistakeholder panel. The discussion focused on how governments and technology companies can work together to implement the UNGPs across value chains to ensure the respect, protection, and promotion of human rights, highlighting the heightened risk in the digital technology sector and therefore, the higher need to manage that risk with appropriate due diligence.

Advancing the 2030 Agenda through Inclusive and Rights-Respecting Digital Policy

UN General Assembly 78th Session Side-Event
New York, United States - September 2023

On the margins of the 78th UN General Assembly, U.S. Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya hosted a high-level side-event, convening 11 Ministers, 6 Deputy and Under-Secretary representatives, and 7 Executive Level representatives. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken provided keynote remarks, underscoring the Coalition's role as a powerful international platform for critical discussions relating to emerging technologies and as a centre of action to shape inclusive, rights-affirming use of digital technologies. The Ministerial meeting featured a roundtable discussion with government representatives from the FOC, key Group of 77 partners on technology policy, in addition to remarks from the International Telecommunications Union and members of the FOC Advisory Network. The discussion focused on connectivity, access and inclusion, and technology as an enabler of rights to advance UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 9, 10, and 16.

High-level representatives of FOC Member States, key G77 partners on technology policy, and other stakeholders including from the FOC's Advisory Network attending the FOC side-event on the margins of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Africa IGF Panel Session: The FOC Presents - Collective Efforts to Counter the Misuse of Surveillance Technologies | Abuja, Nigeria - September 2023

At the Africa IGF, the FOC organised a panel session featuring civil society, government, and private sector representatives, who discussed threats and benefits to human rights online in 2023 as a result of new and emerging digital technologies, and explored collective efforts to counter the misuse of surveillance technologies. Panellists discussed the importance of ensuring transparency and accountability around how surveillance and other digital technologies are implemented and regulated by governments, facilitating inclusive multistakeholder conversations when designing regulations for digital surveillance technologies, balancing issues of security with the right to privacy, employing objective measures of digital surveillance technology effectiveness for evaluating implications on human rights, and improving regulation.

Global Conference for the Celebration of the International Day for the Universal Access to Information | Oxford, United Kingdom - September 2023

At the Global Conference for the Celebration of the International Day for the Universal Access to Information, UNESCO facilitated a session, in cooperation with the FOC and Access Now, to explore the complex dynamics and evolving landscape surrounding access to information in the digital era. Panellists from civil society, government, and the private sector discussed the challenges and opportunities posed by the Internet, the significance of accessing information online, and the implications of Internet shutdowns and online censorship.

IGF 2023 | Kyoto, Japan - October 2023

At the 2023 Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the FOC and its sub-entities hosted four multistakeholder panel sessions. The IGF provided an opportunity for the Coalition to highlight priority policy areas and related outputs, including the publication of the Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections and the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age. FOC sessions hosted at the IGF included:

- **(Re)-Building Trust Online: A Call to Action**
  Facilitated by the Action Coalition on Trustworthy Information Online, this session highlighted the recent establishment of the FOC Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online (TFTIO). The multistakeholder session introduced a vision statement and set of principles for 'Safeguarding A Trustworthy Global Information Ecosystem', which will continue to be developed under the TFTIO.

- **Elections and the Internet: free, fair and open?**
  This session was facilitated by the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS), and examined causes, trends and impacts of Internet shutdowns and disruptions, and explored how the multistakeholder community can work together to anticipate, prepare for, and where possible prevent Internet shutdowns before they occur, with a focus on identifying practical steps that can be taken ahead of 'high risk' elections in 2024. In addition, the session launched the FOC Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections (p.8).

- **Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age: Turning Principles into Action**
  This session, co-organised by USAID and IDRC, co-Chairs of the FOC FCG, in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, announced the publication of the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age (p.8). The session facilitated a multistakeholder discussion to explore ways to move the Donor Principles forward and consider concrete implementation, as well as how to further advance these activities in 2024.

- Leveraging the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) at International Organizations
  In this session, Canada, the U.S., and the Netherlands (the past, current, and incoming government Chairs of the FOC), as well as FOC Advisory Network Members Association for Progressive Communications and Paradigm Initiative, discussed the opportunities and challenges of using the FOC to shape global norms and advocate for human rights defenders, civil society, journalists, and other stakeholders in multilateral institutions and processes.

South Eastern European Dialogue on Internet Governance (SEEDIG 8) | Zagreb, Croatia - November 2023

The FOC Support Unit facilitated an interactive discussion at SEEDIG 8, where participants discussed challenges and opportunities around donor assistance in the region, and how the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age could potentially address gaps, including the lack of coordination amongst government donors and duplicating efforts, the lack of sustainability, and capacity limitations of smaller to medium civil society organisations.

Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights Workshop | Berlin, Germany - December 2023

The co-Chairs of TFAIR, the Government of Germany and ICNL, hosted a two-day workshop in Berlin, Germany, convening a diverse group of stakeholders to generate actionable ideas and recommendations for AI governance processes, as well as to identify global challenges and explore practical applications and high-impact use cases relating to AI. Participants were invited to provide input into the future priorities and activities of the Task Force to guide the continuation of its work in 2024.

In 2023, the FOC participated in multistakeholder panel sessions, workshops, and other convenings hosted in Costa Rica, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

FOC session hosted at 1) RightsCon in Costa Rica, 2) Africa IGF in Nigeria, 3) SEEDIG 8 in Croatia.

FOC Coordination, Sub-Entities, and Other Mechanisms

FOC and FOC-AN Members convening as part of the Strategy & Coordination Meeting hosted in Geneva, Switzerland.

The FOC's advocacy efforts, including through outputs, events, and submissions to multilateral processes, were coordinated through the Coalition's internal mechanisms as outlined in the ToR. These mechanisms facilitate information and knowledge sharing amongst a broad range of stakeholders including representatives from government, civil society, academia, the technical community, and the private sector. Activities of the FOC's mechanisms and Coalition convenings included:

in-person convenings, including:

- In Washington, D.C. on the margins of the first FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting, hosted by the U.S. (March 2023);
- In San José, Costa Rica, on the margins of the 2023 RightsCon Summit (June 2023);
- In Tallinn on the margins of the Tallinn Digital Summit, hosted by Estonia (September 2023);
- In Geneva on the margins of the final FOC SCM for the year, hosted Switzerland (November 2023).

Steering Committee

In 2023, the FOC Steering Committee (SC) comprised Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

The SC held monthly virtual calls to provide support to the Chair and assist with diplomatic work, and to discuss Coalition activities and next steps. In 2023, these in-person and virtual meetings focused on, among other topics, reflections on the implementation of 2023 PoA, the revitalisation of the FCG, engagement with supranational and regional organisations, FOC approaches to rapid response, the updates and revisions to the FOC ToR in relation to clarifying the working methods of the Coalition, upcoming events, and the development of a variety of joint statements and other documents.

Throughout the year, SC members attended

Funding Coordination Group

The FCG hosted regular meetings providing members with the opportunity to coordinate and discuss upcoming engagements, events, and activities, including commissioning an expert to carry out a landscape analysis of existing donor country engagements and investments, housing the process of drafting the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age, as well as launching a public consultation process to gather feedback from external stakeholders on the Donor Principles, which received feedback from 31 public submissions, including from civil society organisations, private sector, academia, media and other organisations.

In addition, the FCG hosted in-person consultations with FOC members and external stakeholders on the margins of the SCM in Washington, D.C. (March 2023), RightsCon in San José (June 2023), and the IGF in Kyoto (October 2023) on topics such as

advancing inclusion, supporting coordination efforts between development and policy programming within FOC governments, and methods to implement the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age.

Diplomatic Networks

Geneva

The U.S. facilitated a number of activities in Geneva throughout their Chairship. Kicking-off its work in February by mapping out opportunities in the Geneva space related to Internet freedom, digital technologies and human rights, the network also met and coordinated ahead of the 52nd and 53rd sessions of the UN Human Rights Council in February and May, respectively, focusing on strategies on how to leverage existing FOC language in upcoming resolutions. In May, the FOC also hosted a virtual multistakeholder learning session on AI and human rights facilitated by the FOC Advisory Network, which explored how existing international human rights frameworks and instruments respond to the challenges and risks posed by AI systems. In June, the FOC hosted a multistakeholder side-event on using the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to promote fundamental freedoms and prevent the misuse of technology (p.9). In September, the network also participated in an FOC-wide briefing in which the FOC Advisory Network presented its consensus proactive advice on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) process, including recommendations and resources for FOC Member States. The network met at the Geneva SCM in November for its final meeting in 2023 to discuss activities under the incoming Dutch Chairship, and to identify opportunities for engagement.

New York

In New York, the network focused on facilitating coordination meetings ahead of relevant processes in the UN General Assembly, with the U.S. providing a platform for governments to discuss the activities outlined in the 2023 PoA through a convening in May, including conversation around current and future engagement in the GDC with the 2023

co-facilitators of the intergovernmental process, Sweden and Rwanda. The U.S. also hosted a working-level meeting in the network for FOC Member States' representatives participating in the AHC Cybercrime Convention negotiations, which featured a presentation by the FOC Advisory Network on their Proactive Advice on the Zero Draft of the Convention. The network also participated in the September FOC-wide briefing by the FOC Advisory Network on their recommendations regarding the GDC process and substance.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield welcoming participants from FOC Member States' Missions in New York, and other key partners to the NY diplomatic network kick-off meeting.

Paris

The Paris diplomatic network, co-led by Canada, focused its efforts on information sharing and coordination around the UNESCO Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms following the FOC's submission to the consultation process (p.8). Local FOC Member States' and FOC Advisory Network representatives convened virtually in February and May for a set of informal briefings, which provided opportunities for stakeholders to flag concerns and recommendations around the process and substance of the document, and for members to coordinate positions.

FOC Sub-Entities

Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE)

In 2023, TFDE, co-led by Ghana and FOC Advisory Network Members the Association for Progressive Communications, Media Rights Agenda, and the Business and Human Rights Group, worked to advance digital equality globally as well as working towards a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible FOC and FOC-AN, in composition, pursuit of policies, and commitment to continuous learning. Activities led by the Task Force included:

- During the review of the FOC ToR, Task Force members oversaw the addition of inclusive language, and ensured principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility are reflected in the operations and structure of all FOC mechanisms throughout the ToR.
- In collaboration with Canada's IDRC and Global Partners Digital, the Task Force engaged in activities to amplify global South voices and facilitate research to ensure FOC processes continue to reflect principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Task Force members partnered with the Duke University Applied Ethics+ programme to develop a glossary of key digital equality terms, an academic and scholarship repository on digital equality and inclusion, and a repository of FOC Member States national strategies and other initiatives working to bridge digital divides to serve as resources for the Coalition, and held an FOC-wide presentation to share the findings.
- The Task Force hosted an FOC-wide learning session focused on tech-facilitated gender-based violence, bringing together external experts that presented research with a focus on the global South, as well as supported the FOC Advisory Network in developing proactive advice on the Commission on the Status of Women that addressed and provided guidance to members on issues such as tech-facilitated gender-based violence and gender digital divides.

Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TFAIR)

In 2023, TFAIR, co-led by Germany and FOC Advisory Network Member ICNL, held meetings to foster multistakeholder dialogue and information-sharing to increase the capacity of its members to collaborate on topics relating to AI policy and governance, and to promote human rights-respecting AI technologies and the application of existing international human rights frameworks to international governance of AI. Activities led by the Task Force included:

- In June, the Task Force hosted a multistakeholder panel session during the 2023 RightsCon summit exploring 'Strategies to Limit the Use of AI-Driven Technologies for Repressive and Authoritarian Purposes' (p.9).
- The co-Chairs of the Task Force coordinated two learning calls, inviting members to explore the implications of Generative AI and to receive a presentation on GDPi's Global Digital Policy Tracker, which aims to track the development of regulation of digital platforms and AI.
- During the FOC SCM in November, the Task Force facilitated an interactive workshop on Generative AI, providing FOC stakeholders and external participants with the opportunity to enhance their knowledge on the responsible use of AI.
- In December, TFAIR invited members of the FOC and FOC Advisory Network, in addition to external stakeholders, to participate in a 2-day workshop held in Berlin, Germany (p.12) to facilitate information sharing and advance coordination efforts in the coming year.

Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS)

In 2023, TFIS, co-Chaired by the United Kingdom and FOC Advisory Network Members the Global Network Initiative and Access Now, held regular meetings to foster inclusive, multistakeholder dialogue and share ideas, needs, and best practices on Internet shutdowns. The Task Force was guided by four lines of effort: knowledge sharing, response (preventative and reactive), shifting global norms, and improving data collection and presentation tools.

Activities led by the Task Force included:

- The Task Force hosted bi-monthly meetings, including deep-dive sessions on three country-specific cases, where FOC Member States heard from experts and local Member' representatives, a presentation on Access Now's #KeeptItOn report, an introduction to the ISOC Pulse portal, and a technical primer on shutdowns. In addition, information sharing was conducted through quarterly newsletters profiling key issues and updates.
- During the 2023 RightsCon Summit, members of the Task Force, Summit for Democracy cohort, ISOC, and global South representatives, were invited to an in-person meeting to discuss recent developments, share best practices and discuss how to address challenges relating to Internet shutdowns.
- The Task Force advocated for a commitment in the G7 Digital Ministerial Declaration to tackling Internet shutdowns and restrictions, in addition to highlighting the FOC and the Task Force within the text.
- In September, the Task Force participated in a multistakeholder panel session during the Global Conference for the Celebration of the International Day for the Universal Access to Information (p.11).
- The Task Force co-Chairs led the development of the Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections (p.8), which was published and amplified by TFIS during the IGF in October through a multistakeholder panel session titled "Elections and the Internet: free, fair and open?" (p.11).
- The Task Force engaged with relevant initiatives and bodies to foster dialogue and share information, including the S4D Technology for Democracy Cohort, OHCHR, and ISOC.

Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online (TFTIO)

In August, the FOC established TFTIO, co-Chaired by Denmark and FOC Advisory Network Member Wikimedia Foundation, which aims to continue the work of Denmark's Tech for Democracy Action Coalition on Trustworthy Information Online. Activities led by the Task Force included:

- The Task Force held regular meetings to coordinate around the development of policy recommendations for a trustworthy information ecosystem.
- During the IGF in October, the members of the Task Force hosted a discussion introducing set of principles for 'Safeguarding A Trustworthy Global Information Ecosystem' (p.11).
- During the November SCM, the Task Force held an interactive workshop to gather FOC-wide insight and feedback on the recommendations.

Silicon Valley Working Group (SVWG)

In 2023, the SVWG, under Canada's leadership, focused on event coordination and continued building collaboration between FOC members and the private sector. Activities led by the Working Group included:

- The Group hosted ad hoc coordination calls to share information and plans for upcoming events, including collaborating with the UN B-Tech initiative to support a multi-stakeholder consultation on gender, tech and the role of business.
- In March, the SVWG in collaboration with ECNL hosted a welcome breakfast to kick off the 2023 Game Developers Conference (p.8).

The FOC's Task Forces & Working Groups provide a mechanism for focused and issue-based engagement, supporting the implementation of FOC statements, recommendations, and other outputs.

In collaboration with FOC Advisory Network members and external stakeholders, the Coalition's sub-entities facilitate capacity building, coordination on key policy issues, and are a channel for regular information sharing, enabling tangible outcomes.

Strategy & Coordination Meetings

Washington D.C., U.S. | March 2023

In March, FOC Members, alongside the Coalition's multistakeholder Advisory Network, Observers, and other stakeholders, convened in Washington, D.C., on the margins of the second Summit for Democracy, to reflect on progress towards implementing the 2023 PoA, and discuss ongoing coordination in multilateral processes and fora. In addition, Members participated in a joint roundtable meeting with civil society, academia, and private sector representatives from the FOC's Advisory Network to explore thematic goals to guide the Coalition's efforts and opportunities to engage in supranational and regional organisations. Following FOC convenings, Members participated in panel sessions on methods to advance inclusion both within the FOC and the broader Internet freedom and digital democracy space, and with the Atlantic Council's DFRLab on the role of the FOC's in addressing the challenges and opportunities of digital technologies.

San José, Costa Rica | June 2023

In June, FOC Members, alongside the Coalition's multistakeholder Advisory Network, Observers, and other stakeholders, convened in Costa Rica, on the margins of RightsCon 2023, to reflect on the development of an FOC rapid response toolbox and to discuss the engagement of the FOC in supranational and regional organisations. In addition, the Advisory Network held a learning session for FOC members to look at trends impacting human rights in the digital technology space and share insights.
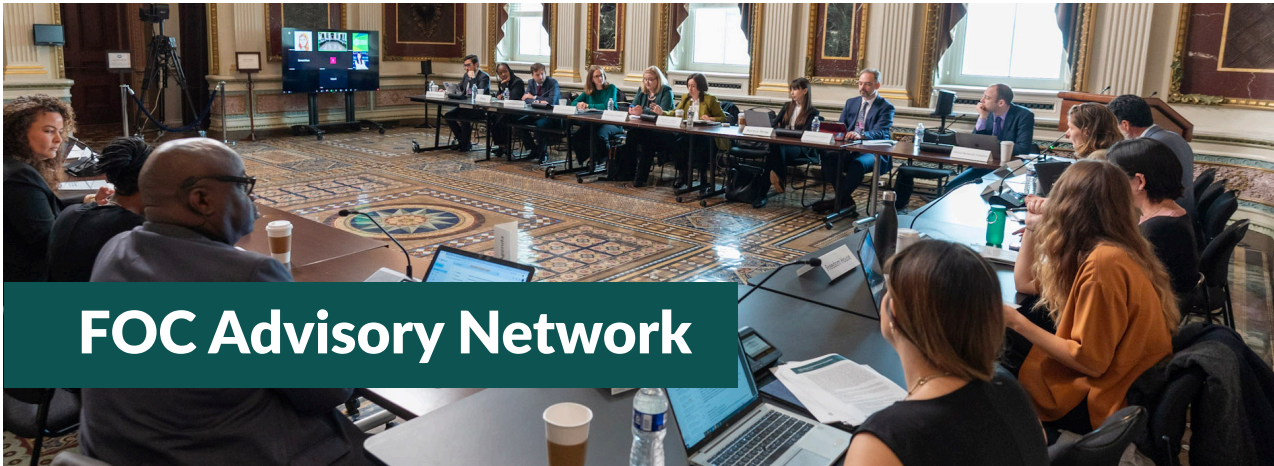
Geneva, Switzerland | November 2023

In November, FOC Members, alongside the Coalition's multistakeholder Advisory Network, Observers, and representatives from the FOC Geneva diplomatic network, convened in Switzerland to reflect on the work of the Coalition's various mechanisms during the 2023 U.S. Chairship, as well as to discuss the 2024 PoA and specific activities under the upcoming Dutch Chairship. FOC Members also engaged in a Joint Roundtable with civil society, academia, and private sector representatives from the Advisory Network to explore strategies for FOC engagement in the Global Digital Compact (GDC) process and the World Summit on the Information Society Review Process (WSIS+20). In addition, TFAIR organised an interactive workshop on AI, giving participants the opportunity to build their capacity and knowledge on the topic. The FOC also heard from the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator (GESDA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) B-Tech Project on future development of AI and B-Tech's Generative AI project.

FOC Member States convening as part of the Strategy & Coordination Meeting hosted in Washington, D.C.

FOC Advisory Network

FOC-AN Members convening as part of the Strategy & Coordination Meeting hosted in Washington, D.C.

The Advisory Network continued to serve as an independent platform for multistakeholder dialogue through which the Coalition can regularly engage non-governmental stakeholders in the Internet and digital technology space. In 2023, the FOC Advisory Network provided advice to FOC governments on the work of the Coalition, facilitated multistakeholder collaboration around FOC activities, and explored possibilities for cooperation to advance human rights online and in the context of digital technologies. With the FOC's commitment to inclusive and open multistakeholder governance of digital technologies, including the Internet, the FOC Advisory Network further served as a mechanism for multistakeholder advice on the aims, objectives, and activities of the FOC, as well as a significant source of knowledge and expertise, supporting the FOC's mission of advancing human rights online through stakeholder engagement in internal and external meetings and events.

Public Outputs

Proactive Advice: UN Global Digital Compact Process | September 2023

In September, the Advisory Network published its consensus proactive advice on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) process, including outlining substantive and procedural concerns, as well as providing a number of recommendations and a list of resources for FOC Member States. This was followed by a presentation from the Advisory Network on the advice to the FOC Geneva diplomatic network.

Engagement with the FOC

The Advisory Network actively engaged with the FOC in shaping the policy and priorities of the Coalition by continuously contributing to the implementation of the PoA 2023 and supporting the development of FOC outputs, including through:

- Participating in and/or co-Chairing the FOC sub-entities (p.15);
- Providing recommendations in identifying thematic goals for the FOC to focus on over the next three years to ensure continuity between Chairs;
- Developing proactive and reactive advice on the GDC, which was published as the first Advisory Network public output, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and the UN Cybercrime Treaty;
- Providing input into a number of FOC outputs, including the FOC ToR, the Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age, the Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns and Elections, the Joint Statement Presented at the 54th Session of the UN HRC on the Heightened Risks Associated with Surveillance Technologies and the Importance of Safeguards in the Use of these Tools, and the draft 2024 PoA;
- Presenting at numerous learning sessions and briefings organised by the FOC;
- Developing discussion papers for FOC meetings;
- Providing recommendations for establishing a rapid response toolbox within the FOC;
- Participating in external panels and events.