Steering Committee Meeting #1
Thursday, 1 February 2024

Attended: Netherlands (Chair 2024); Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ghana, Switzerland, UK, and US; Support Unit (SU)

<u>Welcome</u>
- The SU welcomed members to the first Steering Committee call in 2024 under the Netherlands' Chairship.
- This year's Steering Committee consists of Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<u>Housekeeping Updates</u>
- **SU Updates**
  - Members were asked to review the Support Unit (SU)'s Program of Activities shared ahead of the call, and raise objections, if any, via email to the SU or in the meeting.
    - The document outlines the SU's objectives, as mandated by the FOC Terms of Reference, for the year 2024, and was developed in coordination with the Netherlands. *[Please note, no objections have been raised to the SU].*
- **Upcoming Deadlines**
  - **Thursday, 1 February**: Deadline for comments from the SC on Cabo Verde's letter of intent to join the FOC. *[Please note this deadline has passed - Cabo Verde's application and a human rights record report developed by the SU will be circulated to the SC, who will decide whether to recommend the applicant for Membership to the full Coalition.]*
  - **Thursday, 8 February**: Deadline for FOC to raise any objections to the contents of the Background Paper on Multilateral Negotiations for 2024-2025.
- **Upcoming Meetings and Events:**
  - **w/c 12 February**: FOC Geneva Diplomatic Network coordination meeting ahead of UN HRC55.
  - **TBC - 19 February**: Virtual Briefing for capital and New York missions on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) organised by the Netherlands.
  - **TBC - 29 February - 1 March:** FOC New York Diplomatic Network launch event.

<u>Program of Action 2024 Updates</u>
- The Netherlands noted the launch of the Geneva Diplomatic Network on 24 January, which convened working, expert and Ambassador-level representatives. More information about the meeting can be found [here](#).
- The Netherlands noted the following upcoming activities:
  - Launch of the New York Diplomatic Network on 29 February-1 March including an expert panel on the GDC.
  - A lunch reception will take place w/c 4 March to advance multistakeholder discussions at the OEWG.
  - Engagement in the Summit for Democracy in Seoul, South Korea (18 - 20 March);
  - Engagement in the NetMundial+10 in Sao Paulo, Brazil (29 - 30 April), with the possibility of hosting an FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting on the sidelines;
  - Engagement with UNESCO in regard to an upcoming convening of regulators in Croatia (June).
- The SU provided updates on the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) activities:
  - The FOC-AN is working on a few pieces of advice to FOC governments, including on upcoming Internet governance processes.
  - Members of the group held a virtual briefing for FOC missions in New York on Friday, 26 January, on their Proactive Advice on the revised draft of the UN Cybercrime Convention. The advice has also been made public, and is available on the FOC website.
  - The FOC-AN are also currently revising their Terms of Reference to ensure it is in-line with the FOC's Terms of Reference, as well as deciding on a new set of criteria for

FOC-AN membership which would allow for a more diverse cohort. The SC will be receiving the FOC-AN ToR for sign-off shortly.

Discussion: Program of Action (PoA) 2024 Implementation

1. **Digital Equality Agenda**

- The Netherlands noted the decision not to renew the mandate of the Task Force on Digital Equality (TFDE), highlighting ongoing discussions between NL and the FOC-AN co-Chairs on this topic, while the TFDE co-Chairs are still leading efforts on the external consultation to review and provide recommendations related to DEIA principles within the FOC's structure and mechanisms.
- The next step is a conversation with the Netherlands and the FOC-AN to discuss areas of work to be continued, and where to house these activities as well as those identified in the PoA 2024 (under Goal 3 of the PoA).
- US inquired on the external and internal framing of the digital equality and inclusion agenda, and how increasing digital equality within the FOC vs. working on these efforts externally with the international community and within the multilateral system will be carried out.
  - The Netherlands noted that this issue came up in conversations with the FOC-AN co-Chairs, and should be explored further.
- Estonia emphasised the need to include global South stakeholders in these conversations, noting the underrepresentation of global South Members in mechanisms of the FOC.
  - Estonia noted the Tallinn Digital Summit as a vehicle to implement some of the activities from the PoA.
  - The Netherlands agreed with Estonia's remarks, noting the importance of identifying a regional approach to coordinating around engagement in upcoming Internet and AI governance discussions.
    - Denmark re-emphasised taking a regional approach to the GDC, noting the regional consultations Canada held ahead of the drafting of the Ottawa Agenda.
    - Denmark also noted while the language exercise on the GDC led by the U.S. was helpful, it is important to strategise around engaging global South countries in the GDC coordination.
      - The SU noted the PoA objective *3.3. Expand and diversify FOC engagement and membership,* highlighting the activity to *3.3.c Increasing FOC presence in regions outside the Global North, including by participating in regional IGFs, and by exploring the possibility of an FOC convening in a Global South capital.*
- Switzerland noted 2024 as a busy year with many ongoing Internet and AI governance processes that the FOC is looking to engage in, and that its capacity is limited to engage in a large number of Task Forces.
- The Netherlands noted they welcome Members to lead on activities from the PoA related to the advancement of digital equality and inclusion.

Action >> Members wishing to support or lead on any of the PoA 2024 activities, please contact the Chair and the Support Unit

2. **Engagement in Internet / AI Governance Processes** (*PoA 2024, Goal 1, Objective 1.1 and 1.2*)

- Switzerland expressed interest in supporting the Chair in activities in Geneva relating to advancing the human rights perspective in the GDC.
- The US presented the FOC Background Paper on Multilateral Negotiations for 2024 - 2025, which was discussed at the FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting in Geneva in November 2023.
  - The document captures relevant UN resolutions and other related UN documents for FOC governments to reference in multilateral negotiations on technology and human rights. The topics include key policy areas anticipated to require FOC coordination on

policy positions ahead of the Pact for the Future (2023) and WSIS + 20 (2025) negotiations and respective related processes.
- ○ The US noted that this document is not intended to dictate the position that FOC governments must take in multilateral negotiations, but is to serve as a reference point for negotiators.
  - ■ In terms of next steps, the document will be sent to the FOC Membership to raise any concerns or add additional language. *[Please note the document is now with the Membership; the deadline to raise any objections or concerns to the document, or add language is **COB Thursday, 8 February**.]*
- ○ Members acknowledged the US' leadership in the efforts to produce the paper.
- ○ The Netherlands proposed opening the document up for other Member States and the FOC-AN to add language. *[Please note that the SU is working on ensuring the document is available as a "live" document on the FOC Digital Hub, where Members can directly propose language.]*
  - ■ The Netherlands noted that it will be organising a briefing in the w/c 19 February between capital and New York in preparation for the GDC, for which the Paper can be a useful resource.
- ○ Denmark inquired about FOC coordination with the European Union (EU) on the GDC.
  - ■ The Netherlands noted it is possible to reach out to the European External Action Service (EEAS) to streamline the discussion.

Action>> SU to circulate the FOC Background Paper on Multilateral Negotiations for 2024-2025. *[Please note the document is now with the Membership; the deadline to raise any objections or concerns with the SU to the document, or add language is **COB Thursday, 8 February**.]*

3. **Sub-Entities** *(please note that some of the below updates were added to the minutes due to time constraints during the meeting)*

- **Task Force on Information Integrity Online (TFIIO)** *(previously Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online (TFTIO))* - led by Denmark, the Netherlands, and Wikimedia Foundation
  - ○ Denmark noted the name change of the Task Force, with rationale that the new name more accurately reflects the Task Force's work to outline a holistic vision for a healthy digital ecosystem.
  - ○ In terms of upcoming activities, the Task Force has drafted a Joint Statement on Information Integrity and Elections, to be shared with the Coalition shortly. *[Please note that the statement has been shared with the FOC and FOC-AN for feedback until **COB Monday, 12 February**.]*
- **Task Force on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (TFAIR)** - led by Germany and ICNL
  - ○ TFAIR co-Chairs are currently developing the 2024 work plan for the Task Force.
  - ○ The co-Chairs will be meeting with the Netherlands and the SU to discuss next steps and identify dates for regular meetings.
- **Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS)** - led by the United Kingdom, Access Now, and GNI
  - ○ TFIS co-Chairs are finalising their work plan for 2024.
  - ○ The key thematic focus of the Task Force will be on:
    - ■ Internet shutdowns and elections – leveraging the statement launched at the IGF, focusing on more preventative diplomatic activity;
    - ■ Internet shutdowns and conflict.
      - The key output of the Task Force will be a diplomatic toolkit focused on the above thematic areas, and covering others as resources allow.
  - ○ Other key activities in the norms-shaping space will include preserving and enhancing shutdowns language across the multilateral space, as well as carving out space and flexibility for reactive work on topical issues.