

FOC Steering Committee Meeting #2

Wednesday, 6 March 2024

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

Welcome

- The SU welcomed members to the second FOC Steering Committee (SC) call in 2024 under the Netherlands' Chairship.
- The SU introduced its new Officer, Cath Mitchell, who will be supporting the team with administration and logistics.

Housekeeping Updates

- **SU Updates**
 - **Cabo Verde** has joined the FOC as its **39th Member** after the silence procedure to confirm its Membership passed successfully. The news will be amplified via FOC communications channels, and the point of contact for Cabo Verde will be shared shortly.
 - The **FOC New York Diplomatic Network** held a Chairship kick-off event on 29 Feb - 1 March, with attendance from 24 missions, including FOC and prospective Members - more updates on the event from the Netherlands.
 - As per the FOC Terms of Reference, Coalition Members commit to a number of responsibilities, including **self-reporting on domestic and foreign policy efforts to support Internet freedom** through their United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reports and other pre-existing mechanisms.
 - The Support Unit is preparing a proposal to support FOC Member States in implementing this commitment. The proposal will be shared with SC Members ahead of the next SC meeting.
- **Upcoming Deadlines and Relevant Internal Dates** (*please see below under PoA 2024 updates for events*)
 - **15 March:** End of silence procedure on the Final Draft of the Joint Statement on Information Integrity Online and Elections.
 - The statement is envisioned to be launched at the Summit for Democracy.
 - **27 March:** Next SC meeting.
- **FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) updates:**
 - The call for applications for new FOC-AN Members has opened, and is available [here](#).
 - There are currently 6 seats open; the FOC-AN election committee will be prioritising global South applications, as per the FOC-AN ToR and Rules of Procedure.
 - Once the FOC-AN decides on the final candidates, the list of candidates will be sent to the SC for any objections, and discussed in the next SC call.
 - The process of setting up the new cohort is meant to be finalised by mid-April, and in time before the first SCM.
 - The FOC-AN is finalising their advice on Internet governance processes.

Program of Action (PoA) 2024 Updates

- The Netherlands noted the kick-off event for the New York Diplomatic Network on 29 Feb - 1 March, which convened working, expert and Ambassador-level representatives. More information about the meeting can be found [here](#).
- The Netherlands noted the following upcoming FOC activities:
 - **FOC events in which the Members will strategise around the engagement in Internet and AI governance processes:**
 - **21 March:** FOC Updates & Discussion on Key 2024 Internet and AI Governance Processes - Virtual Meeting [*Please note that this event has been added to the agenda following the SC call.*]
 - Open to capital representatives.
 - **25 March:** FOC Stakeholder Outreach Workshop on Internet Governance, Geneva, Switzerland

- Open to Geneva, capital, and New York representatives.
 - **3 April:** FOC Stakeholder Outreach Workshop on Internet Governance, New York (TBC)
 - Open to Geneva, capital, and New York representatives.
 - **22 April:** FOC Stakeholder Outreach Workshop on Internet Governance, Geneva, Switzerland
 - Open to Geneva, capital, and New York representatives.
 - **TBC (31 May - 1 June):** First Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM), Geneva, Switzerland
- **Engagement in external events:**
 - **18 - 20 March:** Summit for Democracy, Seoul, South Korea
 - The FOC's Task Force on Information Integrity Online will be hosting a session on Information Integrity Online and Elections; the Joint Statement on Information Integrity Online and Elections is envisioned to be launched, should FOC-wide silence pass successfully.
 - More information about the session can be found [here](#).
 - The co-Chairs of the FOC's Task Force on Internet Shutdowns will be participating in a civil society organised session on Internet Shutdowns and Democracy.
 - **23 - 25 April:** Digital Rights & Inclusion Forum (DRIF), Accra, Ghana
 - Potential regional consultations (TBC).
 - **28 - 30 April:** NETMundial, São Paulo, Brazil
 - Potential regional consultations (TBC).
 - **2 - 4 May:** World Press Freedom Day Conference (2-4 May), Santiago, Chile
 - **27 - 31 May:** World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) +20 Review Forum - High - Level Event, Geneva, Switzerland
 - **30 - 31 May:** AI for Global Good Summit, Geneva, Switzerland

Discussion

Advancing a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach in Internet and digital tech governance processes in 2024

- Denmark, Estonia, the US, and the UK inquired on the FOC strategy for engagement in the Global Digital Compact (GDC), and invited more clarity around expectations and nature of involvement from capital in upcoming events and activities.
- Members also inquired how the Netherlands sees the FOC's role in the GDC, and what the expected takeaways from the Geneva, New York, and regional meetings are, noting that an SCM comes late in the process considering countries are determining their national positions in March.
- **On upcoming events in Geneva and New York**, the Netherlands noted that the workshops planned in Geneva (25 March and 22 April), and New York (3 April, TBC) will be hybrid and that capital, Geneva, and New York representatives will be invited to prevent siloing of conversations.
 - The Netherlands noted their approach of holding these kinds of events in the networks was to give Members the opportunity to strategise before the SCM, and bring perspectives from the networks and capital together.
 - The Netherlands highlighted it is essential that the networks and capital are coordinated, with colleagues in Geneva knowing what is happening on the GDC when they start working on WSIS, and colleagues in New York being aware of discussions in Geneva.
 - The US proposed the possibility of smaller convenings at capital levels ahead of the events in New York and Geneva.
 - Switzerland noted its support for the Netherlands' approach of facilitating these discussions at network levels.

- **When it comes to the SCM**, scheduled for late May, the Netherlands noted that they hope the Geneva and New York events will give both capital and network representatives plenty of time to strategise ahead and during the negotiations.
 - Netherlands acknowledged difficulties around travel to New York and Geneva for capital members, however noted the aim to schedule these meetings around other relevant events and fora to make them more accessible.
 - Denmark noted it would be helpful to set up a doodle poll to gauge attendance from FOC members at upcoming events and conferences.
 - The SU also noted that SCMs are opportunities to touch base on the full PoA, while today's discussion is focused on specifically engagement in the GDC and WSIS.
 - Noting that a lot of the discussions on these processes are moving through New York and Geneva, it is currently being explored how to connect and involve capital to a greater extent.
 - The Netherlands noted it has heard calls for greater involvement of capital representatives, and will be exploring how to enhance communications and expected level and nature of involvement from capital points of contact.
- **On regional outreach events**, the Netherlands noted it is planning to invite FOC Members from the regions, as well as prospective partners to gather insights on priorities and perspectives from the region, and these can be connected to FOC priorities.
 - The Netherlands noted it does not expect involvement from all FOC liaisons in the regional consultations. it is not necessary for all FOC liaisons to be present in the regional consultation.
 - The input gathered from the consultations will be presented and discussed at the SCM at the end of May.
- **On the FOC's overall role in the GDC negotiations**, the Netherlands noted it sees the Coalition as a convener of conversations and concentric circle which serves as a platform to engage with other countries outside of its like-minded group on what the importance of human rights in the GDC is.
 - The Netherlands noted it also sees the FOC as a vehicle to create a narrative for tying together human rights and development issues, which it aims towards through the planned regional consultations.
 - The US raised the issue of countries proposing language that pits human rights and development against one another, and the need to identify what the FOC's position is in the negotiations.
 - The Netherlands acknowledged the lack of common knowledge as to what direction the GDC will take, and the difficulties in strategising between capital, New York and Geneva with the dispersed schedule of negotiations.
- The Netherlands thanked Members for the discussions, and noted it will be coming back with clarifying documents which capture the FOC strategy around upcoming negotiations and events.

[Please note that following the SC discussion, the Netherlands has decided to host an additional call with capital FOC representatives to update the full Coalition on the strategy going forward in terms of engaging in relevant Internet and AI governance processes in 2024, and discuss priorities. This call will be held on 21 March -dial-in details to join have been sent through the FOC mailing list and via calendar invitations.]

Action>> The Netherlands and SU to circulate a document capturing upcoming events and activities of the FOC when it comes to engagement in Internet and AI governance processes, clarifying expected level of attendance.

Outreach

- The Netherlands noted it has been having conversations within the FOC Troika (the Netherlands, US, and Estonia), and identified a list of prospective countries for FOC membership.
- The Netherlands welcomed support from the SC in outreach to prospective Members, or additional suggestions for countries to outreach to.

- Germany supported including more global South members.
 - Germany also noted the need to engage existing Members and encourage a more active approach in the work of the FOC.
- The US proposed members of the SC identify specific regions where they are working with their own countries' embassies in the regions to prompt engagement from FOC Members in those regions.

Action>> SC Members to express interest around supporting in outreach to prospective Members by emailing Netherlands and the Support Unit.