Freedom Online Coalition
Strategy & Coordination Meeting, June 2025

Summary Report | Lillestrom, Norway

The second FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) in 2025 took place on 22 June in Lillestrøm, Norway in advance of the Internet Governance Forum (23-27 June). The SCM included in-person and virtual participation from 14 FOC Members, 1 Observer, and 16 FOC Advisory Network Members. The FOC also hosted two open forum sessions and a workshop as part of the official IGF program.

Table of Contents

SCM Session Summaries[1]

Sunday, 22 June

Opening Remarks, Activity Recap, and Upcoming FOC Engagements
9.30 - 10.00 CEST
Participants: FOC Members; Observers; FOC-AN; External Stakeholders; Support Unit

To open the FOC Strategy & Coordination Meeting (SCM), Rasmus Lumi, Director General for International Organisations and Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia and 2025 Chair of the FOC, welcomed participants to Norway and highlighted the growing challenges facing the digital space. The remarks noted ongoing efforts to ensure the Coalition can respond to evolving issues relating to Internet freedom and digital governance, recent activities to facilitate information sharing on undersea cables, and emphasised the need for further engagement from Coalition Member States. The remarks underscored the Coalition's continued commitment to addressing these challenges through strengthened coordination, and extended a thank you to the Netherlands for their leadership on FOC engagement surrounding the WSIS+20 review.

---

[1] Please refer to Annex 2 for the minutes of the FOC and Joint Roundtable meetings.

Estonia also announced plans to hold a FOC Ministerial meeting during the Tallinn Digital Summit in October, with further information to be shared over the coming weeks, and underscored the importance of continuing discussions of the Coalition's direction of travel, especially in consideration of the ongoing outreach efforts to confirm a 2026 FOC Chair.

FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) co-Chair, Veronica Ferrari, provided further opening remarks, welcoming the opportunity to convene on the margins of the IGF and underscoring the forum's continued importance as a multistakeholder platform. She welcomed the Coalition's ongoing efforts to affirm the value of a multistakeholder model grounded in human rights, and emphasised the need for the FOC to remain a trusted space for collaboration across stakeholders to embed human rights in digital policy and norm-setting. The remarks also highlighted the importance of ensuring that FOC priorities and outputs reflect the experiences of those most affected by digitalisation, and encouraged future Chairships to keep digital inclusion at the core of the Coalition's mission. The remarks reaffirmed the FOC-AN's commitment to support the Coalition in advancing digital governance that is human rights based, multistakeholder and inclusive.

The opening remarks were followed by a brief presentation provided by the FOC Support Unit (SU) to recap recent activities and outline upcoming FOC engagements in support of the [Program of Action 2025](#).

Interactive Capacity Building Exercise on Digital Public Infrastructure
10.00 - 12.30 CEST
Participants: FOC Members; Observers; FOC-AN; External Stakeholders; Support Unit

Attendees participated in a diplomatic simulation exercise designed to test participants' ability to respond to a digital infrastructure emergency, facilitated by Joyce Hakmeh. The scenario revolved around a ransomware attack on NovaCare, a flagship digital public infrastructure (DPI) project originally developed in Svenorya, a fictitious country, and deployed across ten African Union countries to support women's health. Participants played the role of senior diplomats and advisors tasked with managing the crisis and public perception by advising government decision-makers.

This exercise challenged the participants to make rapid, informed decisions in a dynamic environment while navigating complex political and ethical dilemmas. Key skills practiced include strategic crisis coordination, diplomatic communication, and judgment under pressure. The exercise was framed around the FOC Principles for Rights-Respecting DPI, which emphasize human rights-based technology, interoperability, data-driven governance, and adherence to international human rights standards. Participants collaborated effectively, responding to simulated "injects" and events, and reflected on the impact of their actions in the final debriefing, fostering real-world readiness for digital diplomacy and crisis management.

FOC & FOC-AN Joint Roundtable Meeting
13.30 - 14.45 CEST
Participants: FOC Members; Observers; FOC-AN; Support Unit

The FOC-AN provided an overview of their recent contributions, including on undersea cables, DPI, WSIS+20 and GDC, cybercrime, the Human Rights Council (HRC), the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and AI. On undersea cables, they recommended raising awareness through learning calls or a joint statement on behalf of FOC Members. Regarding DPI, they emphasised a rights-based approach and the need for principles to guide implementation, and suggested broader advocacy, especially in the global South. On WSIS+20, the FOC-AN underscored the

importance of genuine multistakeholder engagement and voiced concern about inadequate reflection of civil society input in the Elements Paper, while urging stronger defence of the IGF, and alignment between WSIS and GDC frameworks. On GDC implementation, the FOC-AN highlighted a number of concerns relating to the AI Panel and Dialogue, including the need for stronger human rights language and consistency across both mechanisms, and the importance of multidisciplinary scientific input and the inclusive of diverse human rights experience. As follow-up to the FOC-AN's advice on the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, the FOC-AN noted recommendations for implementation, and the Netherlands welcomed further advice from the FOC-AN on activities that could be undertaken during the upcoming signing ceremony. On UN HRC sessions and the UPR process, the FOC-AN welcomed coordination efforts and encouraged continued pre-consultation, and highlighted general recommendations to establish a good practice of sustained engagement and collaboration between the FOC and FOC-AN for these processes. In addition, the FOC-AN encouraged the FOC to replicate this approach for cyber-related UN discussions and UN General Assembly negotiations.

FOC Strategic Discussion - WSIS+20 & Looking Ahead
15.00 - 16.30 CEST
Participants: FOC Members; Observers; Support Unit

FOC Members discussed the WSIS+20 process and the Netherlands' *Proposals for FOC Engagement in the WSIS+20 Review* (the *FOC Proposal Paper*), which highlighted key FOC priorities such as bridging digital divides, promoting human rights, upholding the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance, AI, information integrity and DPI. Members broadly welcomed the paper, offering feedback aligned with national and regional contexts, with Switzerland and Australia offering concrete proposals on implementation through their non-papers. Members emphasised the importance of human rights as a non-negotiable principle, with several calling for stronger integration of human rights frameworks in discussions on AI, data governance, and bridging digital divides. There was general agreement on preserving and enhancing the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, with support for making the IGF mandate permanent and ensuring the WSIS architecture evolves to reflect current digital challenges. Participants acknowledged the utility of the FOC Proposal Paper as a solid starting point for developing common positions. Members highlighted the need for a positive, practical agenda that builds on existing WSIS Action Lines, but noted the risk of reopening agreed on language. It was suggested to keep developing the internal FOC Proposal Paper and aligning it with FOC Members' national priorities to highlight common ground.

In the second part of the meeting, SU updated Members on 2025 fundraising progress and called for early, flexible, and multi-year contributions for 2026. With the 2026 Chair yet to be confirmed, Members discussed leadership models, continuity in programming, and strategic positioning within broader digital governance initiatives. Issues such as cybersecurity, Internet shutdowns, humanitarian law, and the FOC's internal governance were raised, with calls to streamline priorities and maintain effective coordination despite increasing challenges.

Digital Defenders Partnership Presentation
16.30 - 16.45 CEST
Participants: FOC Members; Observers; FOC-AN; Support Unit

The presentation by the Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP) co-Facilitators highlighted their ongoing work to support human rights defenders globally. The presentation included an overview of DDP's evolution since it was established by FOC Members in 2012, having initially started with a sole focus on emergency grants to becoming a 45-strong team that provides a vast range of grants and support types.

From 2012-2024, DDP 's support types have included emergency response, trainings, infrastructure, and holistic accompaniment, with over 3000 individuals and organisations supported to date. DDP highlighted how their current approach centers under-served communities, prioritizing youth, women, journalists, environmental rights actors, and LGBTQI+ groups, in addition to strengthening local rapid response networks.

Expanding on their holistic approach, the co-Facilitators highlighted how DDP addresses challenges by embedding team members in organisations, and building long-term protection ecosystems. The presentation included a call for support in light of recent funding challenges facing the digital rights ecosystem, and underscored DDPs unwavering commitment to advancing Internet freedom and supporting human rights defenders.

IGF Session Summaries

Shaping Global AI Governance Through Multistakeholder Action
Wednesday, 25 June

Moderator: Zach Lampell, Senior Legal Advisor & Coordinator, Digital Rights, ICNL

Speakers:
- Rasmus Lumi - Director General, Department of International Organisations and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia *(opening remarks)*
- Ernst Noorman - Ambassador for Cyber Affairs, the Netherlands
- Maria Adebahr - Director for Cyber Foreign and Security Policy, Germany
- Divine Selase Agbeti - Director-General, Cyber Security Authority of Ghana
- Erica Moret - Director UN & International Organisations, Microsoft

The session convened a diverse set of stakeholders to discuss the urgent need for rights-based, multistakeholder approaches to global AI governance. Framed around the launch of the 2025 [Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights](), panellists emphasized the transformative power of AI and the associated human rights risks, including algorithmic bias, mass surveillance, disinformation, and the suppression of democratic participation. Speakers highlighted that unchecked AI deployment, especially when driven by commercial or authoritarian interests, threatens core freedoms including freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association. The speakers stressed that AI governance must be rooted in international law and grounded in inclusive, transparent processes that prioritize those most at risk, especially women, girls, and other marginalized communities.

Speakers from government, civil society, and the private sector noted a number of methods to address these challenges, including national algorithm registries, human rights impact assessments, procurement reform, and responsible AI principles aligned with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. All panellists underscored the need for safeguards across the AI lifecycle, from design to deployment, echoing the [Joint Statement](). Examples such as the EU AI Act, UNESCO recommendations, and the Council of Europe's Convention on AI and Human Rights were cited as promising frameworks to inspire global alignment. Speakers also stressed the importance of multistakeholder collaboration to build trust, accountability, and legitimacy into AI systems and policymaking.

The session underscored that human rights are not a barrier to technological progress but a precondition for sustainable and inclusive development. Participants also called for stronger

mechanisms to ensure civil society engagement in governance, especially in repressive contexts, and for the private sector to take a proactive role in minimizing harms and enhancing transparency. The meeting concluded with a collective call to action for governments, companies, and civil society to work together to ensure that AI earns trust, safeguards freedoms, and serves the public good.

Key takeaways:
1. **AI must be governed with human rights at the core** - AI must be developed and deployed in strict alignment with international human rights law, upholding freedoms such as privacy, expression, assembly, and non-discrimination. The misuse of AI for repression, surveillance, and manipulation increasingly threatens democratic processes and vulnerable populations.
2. **Inclusive and accountable governance frameworks developed through multistakeholder collaboration are needed** - Inclusive, multistakeholder approaches involving civil society, independent experts, and underrepresented communities are essential. States and private actors must implement accountability measures, including transparency, human rights due diligence, and safeguards in high-risk applications.
3. **Sustainable, equitable, and human rights-based AI development is essential** - AI systems should support sustainable development, promote gender equality, and reflect cultural diversity. Cross-sector collaboration with UN bodies and scientific panels is needed to ensure AI contributes to the SDGs while respecting environmental and human rights standards.

Calls to action:
1. To support the FOC Joint Statement on AI and Human Rights and advocate for human rights-based AI governance.
2. To advocate for inclusive, multistakeholder approaches to AI governance involving civil society, independent experts, and underrepresented communities to ensure governance models are not dominated by authoritarian or purely commercial interests.
3. For all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and the private sector to engage in dialogue and information exchange with the FOC and FOC Advisory Network on the topic of AI governance.

How Technical Standards Shape Connectivity and Inclusion
Friday, 27 June

Moderator: Laura O'Brien, Senior International Counsel, Access Now

Speakers:
- Rasmus Lumi - Director General, Department of International Organisations and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia *(Opening Remarks)*
- Divine Agbeti - Director General of the Cyber Security Authority of Ghana
- Stephanie Borg Psaila - Director for Digital Policy, Diplo Foundation
- Natálie Terčová - At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC), ICANN / Founder and Chair of IGF Czechia
- Alex Walden - Global Head of Human Rights, Google
- Rose Payne - Policy and Advocacy Lead, Global Partners Digital

The session brought together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to address the pressing need for greater inclusivity and participation in technical standard-setting processes. Participants underscored that these processes are often dominated by technologists and structured in ways that alienate civil society, non-engineers, and marginalized communities. Language barriers, complex jargon, financial costs, and opaque procedures were identified as key factors that prevent broader engagement.

Emphasising the importance of inclusivity, speakers proposed a range of solutions including removing membership fees, creating seats for underrepresented groups, ensuring virtual access, offering real-time translation, and establishing youth and diversity panels. These measures aim to foster broader participation and democratize decision-making within technical forums.

The discussion highlighted how inclusive standardization can have real-world impact, with examples like M-PESA, Aadhaar, and web accessibility standards showing how well-designed technical systems can bridge digital divides and serve vulnerable populations, while those that do not have safeguards pose threats to human rights and fundamental freedoms. A recurring theme was the importance of aligning technical standards with international human rights principles, ensuring that these processes do not unintentionally enable surveillance or exclusion. The session also delved into the geopolitical and infrastructural dimensions of connectivity, particularly the crucial role of subsea cables in global data transmission. Speakers emphasised the need for cross-sector cooperation to safeguard this infrastructure and ensure resilient connectivity. Representatives from companies like Google echoed the necessity of embedding human rights considerations into infrastructure investments and highlighted the private sector's role in promoting inclusive, rights-respecting innovation.

Throughout the session, participants emphasized the need for sustained multistakeholder collaboration that bridges gaps between technologists and civil society actors. They stressed that effective technical standardization must reflect the lived experiences of end-users and communities most impacted by digital technologies. The meeting concluded with a shared vision of standard-setting processes that are not only technically sound but also equitable, transparent, and aligned with the broader goals of digital inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key Takeaways:
1. Inclusivity in technical standard-setting is essential to ensure that marginalized voices, including civil society and non-engineers, are represented and can meaningfully contribute.
2. Technical standards have real-world human rights implications, affecting access to critical services and the risk of surveillance or exclusion.
3. Multistakeholder collaboration and accessibility measures, such as real-time translation and reduced financial barriers, are crucial to fostering global and equitable participation.

Calls to Action:
1. Lower entry barriers for underrepresented stakeholders in technical standard-setting bodies by lowering or eliminating membership fees and offering virtual participation options.
2. Integrate international human rights frameworks into all stages of technical standards development to ensure ethical and inclusive outcomes.
3. Establish ongoing support mechanisms, such as capacity-building initiatives and dedicated inclusion panels, to facilitate sustained participation from diverse communities.

Universal Principles, Local Realities: Multistakeholder Pathways for DPI
Friday, 27 June

Moderator: Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, Executive Director, Tech Global Institute

Speakers:
- Armando Manzueta - Vice Minister for Public Innovation and Technology at the Ministry of Public Administration of the Dominican Republic

- Rasmus Lumi - Director General of the Department of International Organizations and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia
- Keith Breckenridge - Standard Bank Chair in African Trust Infrastructures at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
- Smriti Parsheera - Research Fellow at the Interledger Foundation
- Bidisha Chaudhari - Assistant Professor of Government, Information Cultures and Digital Citizenship at University of Amsterdam
- Sheo Bhadra Singh - Principal Advisor, Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of India
- Luca Belli - Professor at FGV Law School, Rio de Janeiro and Director of the Center for Technology and Society

The panel discussion on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) underscored the complex and often contested nature of digital transformation across global contexts. The conversation highlighted a range of experiences, from Brazil to South Africa, India to Estonia, that reflect both the opportunities and challenges of designing inclusive, rights-based digital systems.

Brazil's PIX payment system featured prominently as an example of how public digital infrastructure can drive innovation, reduce transaction costs, and disrupt monopolistic financial structures. This case demonstrated how state-led platforms, when designed with openness and interoperability in mind, can foster competition and broaden access to services. However, the discussion also made clear that the effectiveness of such systems hinges on governance models that prioritize empowerment over control.

From South Africa, cautionary insights were shared about the unintended consequences of DPI, particularly for vulnerable communities. While digital platforms promise financial inclusion and improved service delivery, they can also open pathways to predatory lending, online gambling, and data exploitation in the absence of adequate regulatory oversight. These concerns highlighted the urgent need for liability frameworks and consumer protections to ensure that digital systems serve the public interest rather than deepen existing inequalities.

India's large-scale deployment of DPI, encompassing digital identity, payments, and data exchange, was presented as an ambitious model of state-driven digital infrastructure. The conversation acknowledged the scale and speed of implementation, but also emphasized that success must be measured not just in coverage, but in how systems are experienced by users—particularly in terms of accessibility, consent, and grievance redress.

Across these contexts, participants emphasized that DPI should not be seen purely as a technical intervention. Rather, it is a civic and political project that requires transparency, public participation, and ongoing oversight. Estonia's longstanding digital governance experience illustrated how trust, human-centered design, and rights-based principles can be foundational to building resilient digital ecosystems.

The discussion returned repeatedly to the idea that the value of DPI lies not in its technological sophistication alone, but in its alignment with democratic norms, its responsiveness to social needs, and its capacity to create meaningful, inclusive change. For DPI to fulfill its promise, it must be embedded in legal, institutional, and ethical frameworks that ensure accountability, equity, and public trust.

Key Takeaways:
1. DPI is not a monolithic technology, but a context-specific ecosystem requiring careful, nuanced implementation.

2. Successful digital transformation demands a people-centered approach that prioritizes human rights, privacy, and meaningful societal impact.
3. The critical role of trust, ethical considerations, and multistakeholder collaboration is fundamental to DPI success.

Calls to Action:
1. Develop rights-respecting DPI governance frameworks that prioritise transparency, accountability, and civil society participation, creating robust protocols for data protection and meaningful stakeholder engagement.
2. Create comprehensive liability systems that protect vulnerable populations from digital risks, involving safeguards against fraud, exploitation, and unintended technological consequences.
3. Redefine "inclusion" beyond technological metrics, focusing on genuine socio-economic empowerment to ensure digital infrastructure creates tangible improvements in people's lives.

Annex 1: Agenda (Abridged)

Time (CEST)	Topic
09.15	**Arrival & Registration**
09.30	**Opening Remarks, Activity Recap, and Upcoming FOC Engagements**
10.00	**Interactive Capacity Building Exercise on Digital Public Infrastructure**
12.30	Lunch Break (60 minutes)
13.30	**FOC & FOC-AN Joint Roundtable Meeting** 1. Recap of FOC-AN Advice 2. Discussion 3. AOB
14.45	Coffee Break (15 minutes)
15.00	**FOC Strategic Discussion - WSIS+20 & Looking Ahead** Part 1: WSIS+20 Alignment (45 minutes) 1. Overview of FOC priorities & language proposals for the WSIS+20 Review process 2. Plenary discussion Part 2: FOC Direction of Travel (45 minutes) 1. Fundraising update and overview of key themes, priorities, and working methods from recent FOC Chairships 2. Plenary discussion on areas of continuity for 2026 and beyond **FOC Advisory Network Parallel Meeting**
16.30	**Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP) Presentation**
16.45	**Recap & Reflections**
17.00	**End of Day**

Annex 2: Meeting Minutes

FOC & FOC-AN Joint Roundtable Meeting

Recap of FOC-AN Advice & Discussion

FOC-AN Members provided an overview of proactive and reactive advice, and other FOC-AN contributions provided to the FOC in 2025 and 2024 (as relevant).

- FOC-AN Reactive Advice: Undersea Cables (May 2025)
  - Following the overview of this piece of advice and its recommendations, FOC-AN Members noted that FOC countries should continue to raise awareness of this issue through means such as learning calls or producing a joint statement.
  - Estonia thanked the FOC-AN for their advice and noted the FOC will continue exploring how to include this issue in future FOC discussions.
- FOC-AN Proactive Advice: Digital Public Infrastructure (June 2024)
  - Following the overview of this piece of advice and its recommendations, FOC-AN Members noted DPI as a significant theme in international processes, emphasising that there needs to be a human rights based approach to DPI.
    - They noted DPI can be political depending on the perspective; thus, DPI principles can serve as guidance for implementation, as well as to fill gaps in knowledge and skills.
    - FOC-AN Members noted an opportunity to utilise the DPI framework being discussed as part of GDC implementation and promote it as a baseline on how such conversations should be structured. In addition, mapping case studies on how DPI has worked in different national political and economic contexts was noted as a useful exercise to showcase how the DPI principles can apply in specific situations.
      1. Netherlands noted difficult internal processes, coordination among departments working on this topic, and capacity as some of the challenges for coordinating a common response, so looking towards WSIS/ GDC can be useful.
      2. FOC-AN Members noted Estonia as a success model and suggested Estonia can hold a strong leadership position within the GDC implementation process, for example.
    - Chile noted having a solid DPI allows for easier access to a variety of services, which can aid in rebuilding during, for example, disaster management scenarios.
  - Members discussed next steps including:
    - Finalisation of the principles, which is aimed for the beginning of October, in time for the Tallinn Digital Summit.
    - Implementation and the need to ensure the FOC Principles on DPI are socialised more broadly, including among FOC Members' development agencies, as well as among global South countries where DPI has already been deployed.
      1. This includes FOC capacity building efforts on the topic.
      2. FOC-AN Members suggested that FOC looks for and works together with global South countries to demonstrate that the principles can be implemented.
    - Further, they noted it is vital for the FOC Members to advocate for clear rights-respecting regulatory language in the WSIS/ GDS and other related

processes. Following the future issuance of the principles, the FOC-AN Members recommended that the Coalition moves on to advocating for aligning the systems with the principles.

- FOC-AN Members from the region noted DPI is a key priority area for the G20 Digital Working Group, where the South African presidency is advocating for a distinctly African approach to DPI, grounded in inclusion, accessibility, and democratic governance. They noted the following:
    - Many DPI projects in Africa (e.g. digital IDs, payment systems) have lacked meaningful inclusion.
    - DPI must be tied to digital access - considering not just supply-side metrics (e.g. infrastructure rollout) but also demand-side factors (e.g. affordability, usability, literacy).
    - The region should define its own approach to DPI based on these realities.
    - Access should not be limited to internet connectivity, and should consider complementary technologies that reach underserved populations.
    - Data governance will shape public trust in government and digital systems.
    - Emphasis on democratic governance, legitimate and secure data access, and creating societal value, not just government efficiency.
- In relation to the above, FOC-AN Members provided the following recommendations:
    - Promote open-source approaches;
    - Involve national statistics bodies;
    - Enable data sharing through appropriate segmentation and safeguards.

- FOC-AN Proactive Advice: WSIS+20 (February 2025) and Global Digital Compact (May 2024) / April 2024)
    - FOC-AN Members noted the following regarding the process:
        - Multistakeholder engagement remains a priority, noting two letters broadly supported by civil society.
        - Co-faciliators have submitted a roadmap and have launched an informal multistakeholder advisory board, based on a proposal submitted by the EU:
            1. The board's aim is to provide a direct link for the co-facilitators to different experts on the WSIS+20 process.
            2. They noted there needs to be management of expectations as the board consists of only a few people who do not represent all stakeholders and are expected to synthesise a big amount of input.
            3. Responsibility should be shared but it will fall primarily on the member states, who should not be placed on the board by default.
            4. While this is a good initiative, FOC-AN Members noted an eye should be kept on implementation, as it seems that the process is not fully reflective of the stakeholders' recommendations. FOC-AN Members expressed concerns that non-governmental input has not been reflected in the Elements Paper and called for a stronger defense of the multistakeholder model.
    - FOC-AN Members noted the following about the substance of the Elements Paper:
        - While FOC-AN noted that more work is required to address all relevant issues, some parts of the Paper are uneven in their framing and development, with some requiring more clear feedback, while others do not.
        - The human rights section can benefit from incorporating relevant GDC language.

- There needs to be more clear references in support of the multistakeholder model.
- They reiterated the call for making the IGF mandate permanent with sustainable funding, strengthened institutional capacity and greater inclusion from under-represented groups and regions, as well as clarifying what aligning GDS and WSIS looks like.
  - FOC-AN Members expressed concern that the Sounding Board could become a shortcut in stakeholder engagement, failing to reflect the full range of stakeholder perspectives. They noted that the tone set by the GDC on stakeholder engagement risks being replicated in the WSIS process, and flagged a lack of visibility on how consultation inputs are being incorporated into outputs.
  - FOC-AN Members highlighted that despite broad consensus during non-governmental sessions on making the IGF permanent, this was not reflected in the Elements Paper. They argued that the multistakeholder model must be defended, as it is currently being diluted, and assessed that the WSIS process appears to be leaning too heavily into the GDC framework, which they viewed as a step backward rather than an evolutionary step forward.
  - FOC-AN Members raised concerns about Article 59, stating it effectively reproduces the Tunis Agenda without referencing it. They warned that this framing promotes a multilateral Internet governance model that marginalizes other stakeholders and, when paired with the enhanced cooperation language, suggests a top-down approach to the WSIS process.
  - FOC-AN Members argued that enhanced cooperation has already been addressed through the GDC and urged that countries advocating for an intergovernmental model should clearly articulate their intentions. They cautioned that reopening this discussion could result in more bureaucratic and exclusionary structures.
  - While FOC-AN Members found the first part of the Elements Paper better thought out, they expressed concern that the WSIS process is being overshadowed by the GDC on issues such as AI, digital public infrastructure, and data governance. They warned that transforming WSIS into a narrowly focused process could make it irrelevant within five years.
  - FOC-AN Members emphasized that WSIS has endured due to its flexibility and openness to new issues - qualities the GDC lacks. They concluded that the process must focus on precise but balanced language to maintain the document's long-term relevance without making it overly specific.
- In regards to the Global Digital Compact (GDC), which the FOC-AN has previously provided advice in 2024 (FOC-AN Input on the UN Global Digital Compact (May 2024) / FOC-AN Proactive Advice on the GDC Zero Draft (April 2024), FOC-AN Members:
  - FOC-AN Members thanked the FOC Member States for organizing multistakeholder meetings in Geneva that helped shape inputs into the negotiations on the AI Panel and Dialogue.
  - FOC-AN Members highlighted the following key points:
    1. The human rights language is weak and lacks consistency across the Panel and Dialogue.
    2. The Panel needs multidisciplinary scientific input and the inclusion of diverse human rights expertise.
    3. There is a tension between multistakeholder governance and multilateral approaches that needs to be clarified.

4. The relationship and interplay between the Panel and the Dialogue should be better defined.

- FOC-AN Members also raised a side question on the role of the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET), asking for clarification on its current activities.

- In regards to the UN Convention Against Cybercrime (FOC-AN Advice November 2024 / September 2024 / July 2024 / January 2024), the FOC-AN noted:
  - The FOC-AN has previously advised governments not to sign the treaty, which was signed in December.
  - Key recommendations for implementation include:
    - Promote a rights-respecting implementation
    - Push for implementation guidelines
    - Confirm interpretation of Article 24
    - Clearly articulate ongoing human rights concerns
    - Be prepared to push back against rights-harming language in future protocol negotiations
    - Include civil society in drafting rules and procedures
    - Support research into treaty implementation, especially regarding cybercrime legislation across jurisdictions
    - Challenge the narrative that the treaty simply solves cross-border data access for majority world countries
  - The FOC-AN recognizes that foreign ministries might not be directly responsible for treaty negotiations, but should carry the message on implementation to those departments and agencies responsible.
  - Netherlands noted it welcomes further advice from the FOC-AN on activities that could be undertaken during the signing ceremony to be held in Hanoi, Viet Nam, that could further some of the advice provided.

- Recommendations on Internet Freedom and Human Rights Online for UPR49 (April 2025) / Proactive Advice_UN CSW69 (March 2025)
  - The FOC-AN noted it recognizes and values the FOC's and Estonia's effort to coordinate ahead of Human Rights Council (HRC) and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) sessions.
  - The FOC-AN encouraged the FOC to:
    - Sustain the practice of pre-consultation
    - Replicate this approach for cyber-related UN discussions and UN General Assembly negotiations.
  - Regarding specifically the UPR, the FOC-AN noted general recommendations to establish a good practice of sustained engagement and collaboration between the FOC and the FOC-AN during the UPR processes:
    - FOC Members to report on UPR and include digital considerations in recommendations;
    - FOC Members to engage with the FOC-AN before sessions and brainstorm ways to share submissions;
    - Create a potential repository of submissions;
    - Help connect with local organizations from countries under review.

FOC Strategic Discussion - WSIS+20 & Looking Ahead

WSIS+20 Alignment

- Netherlands presented their FOC Proposal Paper, including focusing on the outlined priorities key for the FOC and other processes, such as digital divides, human rights and gender inclusion, Internet governance, AI, information integrity and DPI.
  - Netherlands welcomed FOC Members' thoughts and suggestions on the paper and how to align it with national priorities, making it a valuable resource for New York colleagues, in particular.
- Estonia noted that human rights should be non-negotiable and while everyone has their national priorities, it is vital that there is an alignment on the core issues to lay out a strong foundation for cooperation.
- Ghana noted more time will be needed for review and internal processing of the document.
- Denmark noted their preparations to undertake the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the second half of 2025, mentioning WSIS to be one of their main priorities in digital diplomacy.
  - Denmark agreed with the framework to address digital divides, and multistakeholder approach to Internet governance, and noted the paper will serve as a helpful resource.
- Chile noted their national priorities include bridging digital divides and gender inclusion, suggesting to keep the paper within this context, as the core goal for the WSIS process is to bridge digital divides.
  - With regards to AI, Chile noted they consider human rights instruments as a better framework for AI than focusing on ethical principles which do not have a clear field of action or limits.
- Switzerland noted the [Elements Paper](#) developed by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), which provides a base for the discussion and emphasised the importance of submitting valuable input from a variety of stakeholders by the deadline of 15 July 2025.
  - Switzerland noted their priority in the process is finding common ground with everyone, including G77 states, learning from the Global Digital Compact (GDC) experience in building bridges to attain a positive result, as well as implementation.
  - Switzerland highlighted the need to update the Action lines, noting the 'how' as crucial to the process to avoid repeating the GDC's lack of inclusion, openness and transparency, as well as to ensure the integration of the multistakeholder approach.
  - Switzerland further noted the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) as an important instrument in that regard.
  - Switzerland thanked Global Partners Digital's helpful efforts to spearhead the [five-point plan](#) and [follow-up recommendations](#), noting UNDESA and co-facilitators' openness to ideas, including the establishment of the informal multistakeholder sounding board, based on a proposal by the EU, as a good precedent if utilised well in the future.
  - SU noted the papers prepared by Switzerland and Australia, which provide more detail on the 'how' on UN architecture, and how to involve the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), providing concrete ideas that are missing from the Elements Paper.
- Costa Rica highlighted the importance of including a human rights perspective in the Elements Paper on the development of AI, in particular on how companies develop such technologies.
  - Costa Rica noted information integrity, dis- and misinformation and AI's influence on the current state of democracy as crucial to emphasise.

- ○ Costa Rica noted the FOC Proposal Paper will be a useful resource with that language providing the foundation on which the FOC Members can build upon.
- Canada noted the paper lacks focus on data governance and suggested FOC to hold a discussion on the topic, and to continue adding common positions.
  - ○ Canada noted their support for highlighting human rights as a cross-cutting issue, as well as for protecting the multistakeholder approach to governance, either in the paper or overall throughout the process.
  - ○ In addition, Canada noted their support for the IGF mandate to be made permanent, to ensure the GDC is being subsumed within the WSIS broader architecture, and for the FOC power of gathering a variety of stakeholders, as well as government representatives from capital, Geneva and New York.
  - ○ Canada noted FOC should build upon the language but also push for stronger language at the start of the negotiations.
- Australia thanked the Netherlands for developing the paper and noted the priorities echo those of Australia's.
  - ○ Australia noted their paper focused on the pragmatic side of things, including on the how and on the actions that need to be taken, including proposing a number of initiatives as starting points.
  - ○ Another priority was IGF and the importance of making it permanent and self-sustaining.
  - ○ The Australian paper looked at the existing evidence and attempted to provide the key messages from countries within ITU, GDC, IGF, and WSIS forums, and offered positive solutions to some of the named challenges.
  - ○ Australia invited FOC Members for their thoughts and feedback, while noting that there is a path forward without undermining WSIS framework and building upon the expertise that WSIS brought together.
- SU suggested Australia and Switzerland to review their papers for any areas of disagreement.
  - ○ Switzerland noted the Australian paper focused on providing a positive narrative and substance. While there are no major disagreements, Switzerland believes the IGF leadership model should not be abolished, as suggested by Australia.
  - ○ Australia agreed that both papers have a similar broad direction.
- Chile noted more focus should be placed on business and human rights, including on due diligence and transparency in the development of new technologies.
  - ○ Chile further noted their push for human rights language in the HRC resolution on new and emerging technologies, as well as for a multistakeholder approach in the WSIS process, and asked for support for this language in the negotiations from FOC Members.
  - ○ Switzerland noted the Ruggie principles (formally known as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) as central part of the human rights positioning and supported the inclusion of such frameworks in the FOC paper.
    - ■ Luxembourg supported this suggestion.
- Netherlands noted they are open to feedback and will continue working with FOC to incorporate various comments, as well as welcomed New York colleagues to join the discussions.
  - ○ Netherlands noted the utility of the paper, including through coordinating with a variety of stakeholders, utilising the cross-regional partnerships of the FOC, as well as having a common approach to the co-facilitators.

- ○ Switzerland supported adding as many items in the zero draft to provide a better chance for the FOC to arrive at an agreed outcome and suggested FOC to prepare a joint submission ahead of the 15 July deadline.
- ○ On that note, SU highlighted that in the absence of consensus, the document could not be put forth as a joint FOC submission.

FOC Direction of Travel
- SU provided an update with regards to the budget and fundraising efforts
- SU opened a discussion on the role and positioning of the FOC into 2026 and beyond.
  - ○ SU noted the process for identifying a Chair in 2026 is ongoing, and should a Chair not be identified, it will be the role of the Steering Committee (SC) with support from FOC Members to guide the Coalition's work in the coming year.
  - ○ SU invited Members considering to bid for the Chairship to reach out to SU.
  - ○ SU further noted the current digital governance landscape and geopolitical developments, in which there have been two recent milestone processes where the FOC is actively collaborating on - GDC and WSIS.
  - ○ SU noted the conversation will be continued through the SC and future Coalition-wide meetings, while the Program of Action for 2026 begins development.
    - ■ SU noted the importance of identifying areas of continuity from previous years, especially in the absence of a Chair in the upcoming year.
    - ■ SU provided a brief analysis of recent FOC PoAs and presented a few key areas of continuity.
      - Over time the PoAs evolved to be less prescriptive with having more flexibility now for the Chair and FOC Members to provide support for the implementation and ownership of activities.
      - Consistent areas across the PoAs include diplomatic network and involvement in a variety of international fora and processes.
      - Responsiveness to emerging challenges has also been a continued topic, along with an emphasis on inclusion and regional representation to diversify FOC membership and engage in regional activities.
      - Focus has been placed on increasing engagement of existing members, increasing their awareness of FOC language and activities through efforts such as capacity building, along with a strengthened focus on internal governance and working methods.
      - There has been a reflection on SU activities as well as ongoing efforts to strengthen diplomatic coordination by improving communication between governments, resulting in improved and more coordinated advocacy efforts.
  - ○ SU noted guidance will be sought from the Coalition in the coming months in the development of the PoA.
- Armenia noted the importance of coordination between New York, Geneva, and capital to shape agendas on the various issues concerning digital technologies and human rights.
  - ○ To that end, Armenia highlighted the work of the Human Rights Council, and emphasised areas including gender equality, ethnic minority discrimination, and digital transformation.
  - ○ Armenia noted expert conversations and reform agendas at regional levels, such as the work of the Council of Europe, and noted the importance of streamlining national processes in mechanisms like the UPR and recommendations from the FOC Advisory Network.
  - ○ Armenia also underlined discussions on cybersecurity, international law and potential use of digital technology in humanitarian spaces.

- - SU noted the issue of cybersecurity, as well as use of digital technologies in humanitarian spaces, has been on the agenda for many years, but that these have been largely marginal issues rather than primary for the Coalition.
- Canada noted the myriad of activities and processes upcoming in 2026/27, including G20 with the US Chairing, various negotiations around WSIS+20, GDC, data g governance, AI in military domain, SDGs, space governance, and others in the social, economic and cultural norms domain.
  - Canada noted a wide canvas of ideas and inquired whether FOC wants to limit itself to only UN processes or expand wider.
  - SU also added ITU Plenipotentiary, involving technical standards.
  - Chile noted recent events, such as the Internet blackout in Gaza, and suggested looking at humanitarian law, including in cyber space.
    - Costa Rica supported taking the humanitarian law topic into account and noted ICRC's development of a [specific resolution on ICTs during armed conflict](#), as well as Costa Rica's Chairship of ICRC working group, noting Mexico, Germany and UK as members of the group, and suggesting there can be a way to connect the topics with FOC priorities.
  - Switzerland raised internal accountability of FOC Members, noting the FOC-AN information sharing exercise from 2023 on the situation in Gaza and FOC's challenge to respond in an appropriate manner.
  - Netherlands highlighted Internet shutdowns as important, including noting the upcoming Joint Statement on Protecting Human Rights Online and Preventing Internet Shutdowns in Times of Armed Conflict to be launched during the IGF week.
- Estonia thanked Members for their suggestions and noted the need to prioritise and narrow down the list of topics, given the risk of not having a Chair in 2026.
  - Estonia noted not all Members of the SC were present, as well as raised questions with regards to any challenges the SC cohort in 2026 might face when leading as a group, as well as the increasing challenge of maintaining consensus among the Coalition.
  - Estonia highlighted the importance of leadership and having a Chair.
  - Estonia further noted the Chair is not mandated to match the Chair funds from previous years or provide funding at all.
  - Estonia noted the ToR allows for shared Chairship between two countries but also raised concerns about the effectiveness and efficiency of such a situation.
- Netherlands thanked Estonia for their leadership and highlighted Members can explore different options, including leading a taskforce within the FOC.
- SU noted all ideas were welcome but highlighted the Coalition will be asked to streamline and prioritise during the PoA development.