

# Freedom Online Coalition End of Year Report 2024

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Highlighting the activities and outputs of the Freedom Online Coalition in 2024 under the Chairship of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



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# Letter from the 2024 Chair of the FOC

Distinguished Members of the Freedom Online Coalition, the FOC Advisory Network, and international partners,

The Netherlands was honoured to serve as Chair of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) in 2024, a year of mounting challenges to human rights in the digital age. Digital technologies are increasingly misused for repression rather than freedom, making our mission more urgent than ever. As Chair, the Netherlands focused on concrete actions to strengthen Internet governance, ensure AI development and use respects human rights, defend information integrity, and enhance FOC coordination.

## Key Focus Areas of the Dutch Chairship

- **Shaping Global Internet Governance:** The Netherlands played an active role in the Global Digital Compact (GDC) negotiations, advocating for human rights and democratic governance. Diplomatic coordination between capitals, Geneva, and New York helped reinforce these principles and lay the groundwork for continued engagement in the 2025 WSIS+20 review. The Netherlands also led the development of the [FOC Joint Statement on Technical Standards and Human Rights](#), highlighting the need to embed human rights safeguards in digital technology governance.
- **Advancing Responsible AI Governance:** At the UN General Assembly's High-Level Week, we convened a ministerial event to push for international AI standards grounded in human rights with the adoption of the [Joint Statement on Responsible Government Use of AI](#). Additionally, training programmes were launched to equip FOC diplomats with expertise to strengthen capacity in AI governance.
- **Defending Information Integrity:** The Netherlands co-led the Task Force on Information Integrity Online together with Denmark, contributing to the [Blueprint on Information Integrity](#) and a [Joint Statement on Information Integrity and Elections](#). These efforts provided tangible strategies to

counter disinformation, safeguard democratic processes, and reinforce trust in online spaces.

- **Enhancing Coalition Coordination:** FOC engagement was reinforced through regional dialogues in Africa (Accra), South America (São Paulo), and Asia (Taipei), ensuring diverse perspectives informed international discussions. Efforts were also made to strengthen the capacity-building framework, enabling diplomats to navigate evolving digital policy challenges more effectively.

## Expanding the Coalition

This year the coalition welcomed four new members—Cabo Verde, Slovenia, Colombia, and Armenia—broadening its global reach. FOC Strategy and Coordination Meetings in Geneva and The Hague provided a platform for deepening cooperation and refining strategic priorities.

## Looking Ahead

Cyber operations, disinformation, Internet shutdowns and digital authoritarianism continue to pose serious threats to democracy and human rights globally. Amidst these trends, the FOC's Advisory Network remains instrumental in providing expert guidance and strategic insight to help address these challenges. The Support Unit also plays a vital role in ensuring the Coalition's efficiency and effectiveness.

As the Netherlands passes the chairship to Estonia in 2025, we remain committed to supporting the coalition's work. The FOC must stay proactive, coordinated, and focused on meaningful action to uphold digital rights.

The decisions made today will define the future of digital governance. Together, we must ensure that technology strengthens, rather than undermines, democracy and human rights. Act we must—waiting, we cannot.

Sincerely,

FOC Chairship Team, the Netherlands



# FOC Mission & Program of Action 2024

## 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 2024

The [Program of Action](#) (PoA) outlines the FOC's priority areas and activities. The Kingdom of the Netherlands led the development of the 2024 PoA, in consultation with FOC Member States and the Coalition's multistakeholder Advisory Network.

The 2024 Chairship of the FOC marked a pivotal year for the governance of digital technologies, with a number of global processes taking place with the potential to strengthen human rights online as well as existing commitments to the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance. Building on the United States' Chairship in 2023, the FOC further

advanced its efforts to foster an open, free, and secure digital future shaped in an inclusive and collaborative manner.

The 2024 PoA outlined the following priority areas and goals:

### Priorities:

- **Advancing a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to the governance of:**
  - **the Internet**, by ensuring the Internet remains open, free, global, interoperable, reliable, secure and human rights-respecting, and reaffirming the commitment to multistakeholder governance of the Internet's technical layer;
  - **artificial intelligence technologies**, by ensuring that norms and standards are human rights-respecting and human-centred.
- **Addressing ongoing challenges to Internet freedom**, by advocating for the protection and promotion of human rights where they are impacted by digital technologies, including by addressing Internet shutdowns, censorship, surveillance, and digital inclusion, and working towards ensuring the integrity, authenticity, and reliability of information online.

### Goals:

- To advance a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to the governance of digital technologies, including the Internet and artificial intelligence;
- To address ongoing challenges to Internet freedom;
- To advance principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the FOC and beyond;
- To strengthen internal mechanisms.

The implementation of the PoA was also supported by three active multistakeholder Task Forces on topics including Artificial Intelligence, Internet Shutdowns, and Information Integrity.



# Expanding the Coalition and Strengthening FOC Activities

## Membership

The Coalition welcomed 4 new Member States in 2024, **Cabo Verde, Slovenia, Colombia,** and **Armenia**, bringing the membership to 42 countries spanning from Africa to Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East. By joining the FOC, these states pledged to uphold and advance the Coalition's shared goals and values, and to collaborate with all Members to ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts.

## Strengthening FOC Activities

The changing Internet freedom and digital technology governance landscape also provided an opportunity for the Coalition to reflect on and strengthen its internal mechanisms that enable effective and inclusive coordination and advocacy. These activities included:

### Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

As part of the FOC's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA), the Advisory Network co-chairs of the Task Force on Digital Equality (2020-2023) - with the support and partnership of Canada's International Research Development Centre, the FOC Support Unit, and Global Partners Digital - engaged Different, an external consultancy, to conduct an assessment covering a broad spectrum of the FOC's activities, from its internal structures, to its learning landscape, to its policy and advocacy decisions. The DEIA report provided actionable insights and recommendations to further integrate DEIA principles into the fabric of the Coalition's work.

### Developing a Structured Approach to Capacity Building

With multiple interconnected processes taking place, covering a range of topics related to the FOC's mandate, 2024 showed a demand for a more comprehensive and structured approach to capacity building for FOC diplomats.

The FOC Support Unit commenced the development of a capacity building framework and curriculum to increase FOC governments' institutional knowledge and understanding of issues related to digital technologies and human rights, build diplomats' capacity to adhere to and promote FOC values and commitments as part of their work, create opportunities for wider information sharing across the different regions within the FOC Membership, support outreach efforts to prospective Members, and facilitate opportunities for collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders. With the foundations built under the Dutch Chairship in 2024, capacity-building efforts within the FOC will be continuing in 2025 and beyond, ensuring Members have access to continuous learning on digital technologies and human rights.

### Maximising the Impact of Joint Government Statements

The FOC Support Unit collaborated with the secretariat of the Media Freedom Coalition, who commissioned a [learning paper on maximising the impact of joint government statements](#), which featured input from government and Advisory Network stakeholders. The paper advanced discussions on the use of joint outputs within both coalitions, including through a session hosted during the FOC's Strategy & Coordination Meeting in The Hague, October 2024. This session further highlighted key findings outlined in the paper, including the importance of clarifying and aligning statement objectives across a variety of stakeholder groups; the value of statements for internal advocacy within governments; the need to include more specific and clear 'calls to action' and to root statements in human rights principles; and the importance of governments amplifying statements.





## Advocacy

Under the Dutch Chairship, FOC Member States, with advice and input from the FOC's Advisory Network, engaged in a number of initiatives to promote human rights online, address challenges to Internet freedom, and advocate for a multistakeholder approach to the governance of digital technologies.

The Coalition issued 5 consensus-based joint statements in 2024, developed by a lead drafter in consultation with FOC and Advisory Network Members, on topics including Information Integrity, Cybercrime, AI Technologies, Technical Standards, and the Multistakeholder Approach in the context of UN processes. In addition, the FOC's Task Force on Information Integrity Online (TFIIO), which comprised both FOC and external stakeholders, issued a written output to identify key pillars to promote a positive vision of the online information ecosystem.

On the margins of both multistakeholder and multilateral fora around the world, the FOC hosted 15 panel discussions, workshops, and roundtable dialogues to support both the development and implementation of Coalition outputs. These events invited stakeholders from governments, UN bodies, civil society, academia, the technical community, and the private sector to facilitate discussions on priority policy areas and advocate for a rules-based, democratic, and inclusive world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts.

With the Global Digital Compact (GDC) at the center of the FOC's information sharing and coordination efforts, convenings of both capital

and local networks in Geneva and New York helped identify and advance shared positions in the GDC. As a result of these efforts, the FOC developed concrete proposals for Member States to advocate for the incorporation of language that promotes human rights and the multistakeholder approach, which were utilised by negotiators. The final text of the GDC effectively reinforces many of the core principles that are held by the FOC around human rights online, inclusive digital governance, and ethical technology use.

The Netherlands also spearheaded efforts to facilitate outreach and provide spaces for stakeholders in Africa, Latin America, and the Asia Pacific to share regional trends, including opportunities to advance the FOC's mission and key challenges that need to be addressed to ensure human rights are protected online. These multistakeholder dialogues identified recommendations for FOC Member States in order to further support cross-regional engagement and ensure regional priorities are reflected in strategic discussions and advocacy efforts.





## Coalition Statements & Other Written Outputs

### FOC Joint Statement on Information Integrity and Elections, March 2024

The co-Chairs of the FOC's Task Force on Information Integrity, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the Wikimedia Foundation, led the development of the [Joint Statement on Information Integrity and Elections](#), which underscores that democracies depend on open, free, and inclusive public debate and free and fair elections that help hold governments accountable and responsive to their citizens. The statement outlines calls to action for States, platforms, and the broader tech industry, including to promote and protect information integrity online and combat malicious efforts that undermine democratic systems and human rights.

### FOC Joint Statement on the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, July 2024

With the United States as penholder, the FOC issued the [Joint Statement on the UN Convention Against Cybercrime](#) to highlight the need to ensure the scope of the Convention is carefully defined and accompanied by necessary safeguards to fully protect and promote human rights. The Coalition further reaffirmed its commitment that the same human rights offline must also be protected online.

### FOC Joint Statement on Responsible Government Practices for AI Technologies, September 2024

The [Joint Statement on Responsible Government Practices for AI Technologies](#) was drafted by the United States, and published during the FOC's high-level side-event during the margins of the 79th UN General Assembly in New York. The statement underscores that government policies, processes and regulations regarding AI technologies should protect and promote human rights, and highlights that AI systems, when designed, developed, procured, deployed, used, and decommissioned responsibly, can significantly enhance public service delivery, foster inclusive development, and advance the achievement of the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development. The statement outlines several measures for States to guide the responsible development and use of AI.

### FOC Joint Statement on Technical Standards and Human Rights in the Context of Digital Technologies, October 2024

The Netherlands led the development of the FOC's [Joint Statement on Technical Standards and Human Rights in the Context of Digital Technologies](#), which recognizes that human rights need to be promoted, respected, protected and fulfilled through the entirety of digital technologies' lifecycle, including through their conception, design, development, deployment, use, evaluation and regulation. The statement underscores the importance of integrating a human rights perspective into regulatory and norm-setting processes for digital technologies, and emphasises strengthening multistakeholder coordination on, and support for, the implementation and development of international standards to help ensure that digital technologies, throughout their lifecycle, reflect the FOC's shared commitment to an open, free and secure cyberspace in which human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld. The statement was first presented at the World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly, held in Delhi in October 2024.

### FOC Task Force on Information Integrity Online's (TFIIO) Blueprint on Information Integrity, October 2024

The FOC's multistakeholder TFIIO developed the [Blueprint on Information Integrity](#) to promote a positive vision of the information ecosystem and identify actions and opportunities for governments, private companies, and Internet users. The Blueprint outlines three interconnected pillars: Agency; Trust; and, Inclusion, which combined, articulate a positive vision for a healthy online information ecosystem that supports the production and sharing of accurate, trustworthy and reliable information, and that protects and promotes human rights and democracy.



## FOC Joint Statement on the Future of the Multistakeholder Approach at the United Nations, December 2024

This [statement](#), drafted by Canada, renewed the Coalition's commitment to inclusive, bottom-up and open multistakeholder approaches to the governance of digital technologies and to sustained, meaningful dialogue and engagement with all stakeholders to share knowledge and expertise. The statement further underscores that strengthened multistakeholder processes help to ensure that the digital governance needs and concerns of all stakeholders are addressed and their rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled, in addition to outlining calls to action for States. The statement was published during the 2024 global Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

## Multistakeholder Events, Panel Sessions & Workshops

### Upholding Information Integrity Online to Reinforce Democracy & Human Rights | Seoul, South Korea - March 2024

The FOC's TFIIO hosted a multistakeholder session during the third Summit for Democracy to mark the publication of the Coalition's Joint Statement on Information Integrity and Elections. The session featured remarks from the Netherlands and United States; global testimonies on information integrity from stakeholders based in South Korea, Pakistan, and Bolivia; and a panel discussion with speakers from government, civil society, and the private sector. The session reinforced the need for a strengthened online information ecosystem which respects pluralism, diversity, inclusion, safety and security, and promotes access for users and citizens worldwide.



## Digital Rights & Inclusion Forum 2024 | Accra, Ghana - April 2024

The FOC hosted two multistakeholder sessions during the Digital Rights & Inclusion Forum (DRIF) to highlight ongoing activities and welcome insights on trends and challenges relating to the Internet and digital technologies in the African context. The sessions included:

- **Advancing a Human Rights-Based and Multistakeholder Approach to Internet and Digital Technology Governance**

This session explored opportunities and challenges for the use of digital technologies and protection of human rights in the region. The discussion underscored access to technologies as a right and socio-economic necessity, and highlighted the need to be cognisant of the digital divides and lack of meaningful connectivity and digital literacy in the African context, as well as the possible negative impacts on human rights without policies and legislation that aim to address, minimise, and remedy risks, including those related to data governance and protection, privacy, cybersecurity, hate speech and online harassment, disinformation, and access to information.

- **FOC Regional Dialogue**

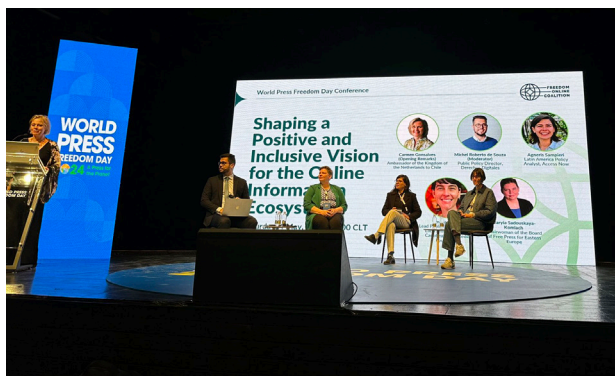
The Netherlands and the Cyber Security Authority of Ghana hosted a regional dialogue for stakeholders attending DRIF. The dialogue highlighted concrete recommendations for the FOC to help address opportunities and challenges relating to the use of digital technologies in the region, including: continuing to create opportunities for multistakeholder and international dialogues on these issues; empowering local civil society actors in engaging with their governments, and in both national and global governance processes; exemplifying the benefit and value of multistakeholder engagement on a local and international level to regional governments; and encouraging capacity building of local actors.





## FOC Regional Dialogue - Latin America | São Paulo, Brazil - April 2024

The Netherlands and Chile co-hosted a regional dialogue on the margins of the NETmundial+10 Conference to share insights and perspectives on local trends and key governance processes with LATAM-based stakeholders. The dialogue had a specific focus on the GDC process, with participants highlighting the need for strengthened language on inequality, transparency in development programs, and meaningful stakeholder participation. Concerns were raised in regard to the shift of UN discussion on the governance of digital technologies from Geneva to New York, and on worrying trends in the region including the increasing use of facial recognition. It was recommended that the FOC further enhance internal coordination with Members in the region, and facilitate dialogues to ensure that regional perspectives inform governance frameworks.



## Shaping a Positive and Inclusive Vision for the Online Information Ecosystem | Santiago, Chile - May 2024

The FOC's TFIIO hosted a multistakeholder discussion during the 2024 World Press Freedom Day Conference. Session panellists discussed the root causes of deteriorating information integrity, and emphasised the role of disinformation, hate speech, and Internet shutdowns in restricting free expression. Civil society speakers highlighted the need for further efforts to advance digital literacy, stronger protections for journalists, and multistakeholder collaboration to counter online censorship, in addition to underscoring the importance of funding for independent media and facilitating dialogues to share regional perspectives to address these challenges.

## The Impact of Technical Standards on Human Rights in the case of Digital Technologies | Geneva, Switzerland - May 2024

During the WSIS+20 High-Level Forum, the Netherlands, together with the OHCHR, hosted a session on the role of various stakeholders in ensuring a rights-respecting approach to developing emerging technologies, particularly in the development and implementation of technical standards. Panelists considered strategies for integrating human rights safeguards into the technical standards development process, building on the interlinkages between multistakeholder and human rights approaches to the governance of the Internet and digital technologies. The session addressed governments' human rights obligations when endorsing standards and delegating regulatory functions to standard-setting bodies, and the private sector's responsibility to respect human rights as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Panelists urged standard-setting organizations to be open, transparent, and inclusive, emphasizing the need for multidisciplinary participation—especially from human rights experts—and called on governments and standard-setting bodies to support their involvement.

## Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Forum | Taipei, Taiwan - August 2024

The FOC hosted a regional dialogue and engaged in an AI symposium during the Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) to share insights and perspectives with local stakeholders and advance priority areas outlined in the 2024 PoA. The sessions included:

- **FOC Regional Dialogue**

The FOC regional dialogue during the Asia-Pacific IGF, hosted by the Netherlands, emphasized the need for inclusive multistakeholder engagement, stronger youth representation in regional and global fora, and sustainable funding to support civil society. Participants highlighted the following recommendations to the Coalition: fostering collaboration with technical communities and civil society stakeholders;



continuing efforts to ensure representation of marginalized groups; maintaining the FOC's role in digital governance processes; and, to uphold agility in the FOC's responses to pressing global issues, including Internet shutdowns and other digital rights abuses.

- **Promoting Trust Under the Age of AI and Emerging Technologies**

The Netherlands, as Chair of the FOC, engaged in an AI symposium hosted on the

margins of APriGF by the FOC's Observer, Taiwan, to exchange views on the role and importance of trust in the development and application of emerging technologies. Speakers discussed the role of the FOC in promoting rights-respecting development, use, and governance of AI, and examined the latest trends in AI development, in addition to spotlighting Asia's role in promoting trustworthy AI technologies.

## AI for Humanity: Charting the Global Course for Human Rights-Based Governance

New York, United States - September 2024

On the margins of the 79th UN General Assembly, the Netherlands hosted a ministerial side-event gathering high-level representatives from government, UN bodies, civil society, and the private sector to discuss integrating human rights standards into AI governance frameworks. Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp emphasized that human rights protections do not hinder economic growth but instead foster stronger societies. He called for robust international AI governance standards and broad international cooperation to harness AI for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

During the event, Colombia was welcomed as the 41st member of the FOC, with Minister Mauricio Lizcano reaffirming the country's commitment to inclusive and human-centered AI development. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the FOC Joint Statement on Responsible Government Practices for AI Technologies, urging governments to adopt AI practices that protect citizens' rights. Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna announced Estonia's 2025 Chairship of the FOC, emphasizing the need for inclusive and equitable digital governance.

A panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Alison Gillwald, featured experts from the UN, civil society, and the private sector, who stressed the dual potential of AI—both as a tool for progress and as a risk to human rights if not properly governed. The panel underscored the importance of aligning AI governance with international human rights law and ensuring diverse, inclusive participation in shaping AI policies. The discussions set the stage for continued multistakeholder collaboration to promote responsible AI development and human rights-based AI governance.



Dr. Alison Gillwald (Research ICT Africa) opening the panel discussion during the FOC's Ministerial side-event in New York.



(Left to right) Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, Nighat Dad, Maryana Iskander, Rose Jackson, H.E. Margus Tsahkna, H.E. Caspar Veldkamp, Boye Adegoke, H.E. Dr. Winifred Nafisa Mahama, H.E. Henri Verdier.



## **Freedom on the Net 2024: The Struggle for Trust Online | The Hague, Netherlands - October 2024**

Together with FOC Advisory Network Member Freedom House and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the FOC co-organised the European launch event for the 2024 Freedom on the Net Report. The event highlighted the ongoing decline of Internet freedom, with opening remarks from Ambassador Ernst Noorman underscoring the important role of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) in safeguarding digital rights. Marietje Schaake provided keynote remarks, highlighting the growing fragmentation and privatization of the Internet. Findings from the report revealed increasing censorship, content manipulation, and attacks on fact-checkers, with positive examples from South Africa and Taiwan demonstrating effective multistakeholder approaches. During a panel discussion with civil society stakeholders, panellists stressed the importance of regulation, enforcement and civil society engagement, particularly from the Global South. The event concluded with concerns over the proposed UN Convention Against Cybercrime, highlighting the need for vigilance and proactive global policymaking to protect online freedoms.



*Dutch Cyber Ambassador Ernst Noorman providing opening remarks during the Freedom on the Net 2024 Europe launch event in The Hague.*

## **Addressing the Human Impacts of Cyber Incidents - A Ransomware Case | New York, United States - December 2024**

The Kingdom of the Netherlands, Ghana, Global Partners Digital, and the Freedom Online Coalition hosted a side event during the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on ICTs, bringing together a range of stakeholders to discuss the profound human and gender-differentiated impacts of ransomware incidents,

the operationalisation of the normative framework of responsible state behavior, and strategies to mitigate these threats. The session emphasised ransomware's tangible consequences at the global, regional and national levels, and highlighted how such incidents have differentiated and cascading impacts on particular individuals and groups, including women and populations facing systemic inequalities. The event was a timely contribution to build on the OEWG's 3rd Annual Progress Report, which included language on ransomware incidents.

## **2024 Internet Governance Forum | Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - December 2024**

The FOC hosted four multistakeholder sessions during the 2024 Internet Governance Forum to highlight the work of the Coalition and welcomed insights from a diverse group of stakeholders on priority policy areas that relate to digital technologies and leveraging opportunities to advance a shared vision of a democratic, inclusive, and rights-respecting digital future. The sessions included:

- **Inclusive Multistakeholderism: Tackling Internet Shutdowns | Day 0 Session**

The session, organised by the co-Chairs of the FOC's Task Force on Internet Shutdowns – the United Kingdom, Access Now, and the Global Network Initiative – focused on the rising prevalence of Internet shutdowns, their broad impact on society, and the need for a multistakeholder approach to address them. Speakers emphasized the growing threat of Internet shutdowns globally and the need for accountability, transparency, more research and advocacy efforts to inform better policymaking and prevent disruptions. The session further emphasized the importance of governments, businesses, civil society, and academia working together to prevent shutdowns and mitigate their effects, highlighting cases where commitments to open Internet access have been made. The UN Global Digital Compact (GDC) and other frameworks were identified as key opportunities to promote connectivity and integrate human rights concerns into digital governance.





- **Human Rights Impacts of AI on Marginalized Populations | Day 0 Session**

The session, facilitated by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, highlighted the importance of embedding safeguards in AI systems to prevent abuses, particularly those affecting marginalized communities. Speakers discussed AI's role in exacerbating gender-based violence and discriminatory content moderation targeting LGBTQI+ individuals, pointing out governance gaps and the risks of deploying AI tools from the global North into the global South without local adaptation. Key solutions proposed included strengthening content moderation with human oversight, integrating marginalized perspectives in AI design, and conducting human rights impact assessments. The session also emphasized the importance of multistakeholder engagement in shaping AI governance.

- **A Rights-Respecting Approach to Emerging Tech Development | Networking Session**

The session emphasized the need for a human rights-based approach in tech development, with a focus on marginalized populations, and the FOC's role in global cooperation and multistakeholder engagement. In addition, Estonia's 2025 FOC Chairship priorities were highlighted, including tech governance, digital inclusion, and regional engagement. Panellists called for stronger stakeholder collaboration to address issues like content moderation, gender discrimination, and digital inclusion, particularly in the global South. They stressed the importance of civil society

participation, overcoming barriers like technical gatekeeping, and ensuring transparency and accountability in the private sector. Finally, the discussion underscored the need to embed human rights in tech standards, foster inclusivity, and align diverse stakeholder interests to create fair and responsible digital spaces.

- **Ensuring an Inclusive and Rights-Respecting Digital Future | Open Forum**

The session, led by the Netherlands, FOC Chair 2024, emphasized the role of multistakeholder collaboration in implementing the UN Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the WSIS+20 Review. The panellists highlighted existing international frameworks for a rights-respecting digital future and stressed the need to move from agreed language to action. The session further underscored the importance of inclusive digital governance, strengthening platforms like the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and ensuring alignment with human rights principles. The discussion focused on the governments' role in promoting inclusivity, the private sector's responsibility for accountability, and the need to empower marginalized voices through capacity building and multilingual initiatives. Speakers also called for integrating technical expertise to create practical and effective digital governance frameworks.

The FOC hosted over 15 panel sessions, dialogues, and workshops during or on the margins of multistakeholder or multilateral fora throughout the year, including in Seoul, Accra, São Paulo, Santiago, Geneva, Taipei, New York, The Hague, and Riyadh.

These events provided a platform for stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, the technical community, media, and the private sector to explore opportunities and challenges to advance Internet freedom and rights-respecting governance of digital technologies.





FOC and FOC-AN Members convening as part of the Strategy & Coordination Meeting hosted in The Hague.

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.

## Steering Committee

The Chairship of the Netherlands was supported by the FOC Steering Committee (SC), which comprised Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The SC held monthly online meetings and convened in-person on the margins of global fora, such as the Internet Governance Forum, to support and guide the Chair in implementing activities outlined in the 2024 PoA. These discussions focused on, among other topics, shaping the FOC's engagement in key multilateral processes including the UN GDC, efforts to increase engagement and conduct outreach to prospective Members, and methods to address concerning trends and human rights violations through FOC mechanisms.

## Funding Coordination Group

The FOC's Funding Coordination Group (FCG), under the leadership of Canada through the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the United States via the US Agency

for International Development (USAID), furthered efforts to socialise and implement the FOC's Donor Principles for Human Rights in the Digital Age. In addition to piloting activities within their respective agencies to advance the Donor Principles, the FCG co-Chairs facilitated a session during the FOC's Strategy & Coordination Meeting in The Hague to explore how they have been leveraged by stakeholders, and to highlight recommendations gathered from consultations, including: developing key indicators and other methods of formal reporting; providing training to development missions and staff on implementation; incorporating the Donor Principles into requests for proposals and project applications; and, to explore incorporating the Donor Principles into the GDC and UNDP's DPI safeguarding framework.

## Diplomatic Networks

### Geneva

The FOC Geneva network engaged on a number of priority areas under the Dutch Chairship through information sharing and diplomatic coordination activities. These included a number of multistakeholder workshops, consultations and strategic conversations on the GDC and the Pact for the Future with FOC Members, the FOC Advisory Network, and other key partners and stakeholders. These events were crucial in strengthening ties between local and capital-level representatives, and paving the way for joint FOC coordination to promote a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to





Internet and digital technology governance ahead of and in the negotiation processes. Ahead of the UN Human Rights Council sessions, the network met to share insights and information, facilitate capacity building for FOC Member States on specific issue areas with the FOC Advisory Network, and exchange FOC language proposals. The network also facilitated discussions on the human rights impact of the use of ICTs and AI in the military and humanitarian context, and exchanged information around the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to assist Member States participating in the process. Throughout all of these activities, the network continuously facilitated dialogue and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including UN secretariats and agencies whose work focuses on the impact of digital technologies on human rights, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). FOC Geneva network representatives also played an active role in the FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting held in Geneva in May 2024, and contributed to various capital-led discussions.



FOC Geneva Diplomatic Network representatives and members of the FOC Advisory Network during a multistakeholder workshop on the Global Digital Compact in Geneva.

## New York

In New York, the FOC network convened discussions around the GDC and the Pact for the Future, and the WSIS+20 Review, aimed both at advancing strategic discussions on the FOC's positions in the processes, as well as bridging the information and coordination gap between New York, Geneva, and capital representatives. These events included multistakeholder components that sought to build the capacity and knowledge of FOC

Member States and gather insights and advice from civil society, academia, the private sector, and the technical community from the FOC Advisory Network and beyond, and government-only components that aimed to advance the FOC's goal of advocating for a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to Internet and emerging technologies governance in the GDC and Pact for the Future negotiations. The network also engaged in various capital-led discussions, and was also crucial in ensuring the success of the High-Level Ministerial event "AI for Humanity: Charting the Global Course for Human Rights-Based Governance", held in September on the margins of the UN General Assembly.



Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN, Bahia Tahzib-Lie, providing remarks during the 2024 kick-off event in New York.

## FOC Sub-Entities

### Task Force on Information Integrity Online

In 2024, TFIIO, co-led by Denmark, the Netherlands, and FOC Advisory Network Member the Wikimedia Foundation, advanced efforts to promote a positive vision for the online information ecosystem through a number of multistakeholder events and developed the FOC's Joint Statement on Information Integrity and Elections, in addition to the Task Force's Blueprint on Information Integrity. Activities led by TFIIO included:

- The development of the Joint Statement on Information Integrity and Elections was led by the Task Force, which subsequently hosted a panel session during the third Summit for Democracy, in Seoul, Korea to launch the statement and underscore that democracies depend on open, free, and inclusive



public debate and free and fair elections that help hold governments accountable and responsive to their citizens.

- During World Press Freedom Day in Santiago, Chile, the Task Force convened stakeholders from civil society, government, and media to explore the root causes of the deterioration of information integrity, and advance efforts to promote a positive and inclusive vision of the online information ecosystem.
- The Task Force facilitated a learning session for the broader FOC and Advisory Network membership on disinformation trends around elections, countering disinformation, and promoting information integrity, with presentations from International IDEA and FOC Advisory Network member Microsoft.
- Task Force Members participated in monthly meetings and regular check-ins to share insights and perspectives, which contributed to the development of the Blueprint.
- In October, the Task Force finalised the Blueprint on Information Integrity, and presented the output to FOC Member States, the Advisory Network, and external stakeholders during the Strategy & Coordination Meeting in The Hague.

## Task Force on Internet Shutdowns

The Task Force on Internet Shutdowns (TFIS) continued its mandate in 2024, with the United Kingdom, Access Now, and the Global Network Initiative chairing the Task Force. TFIS worked to improve coordination and engagement among like-minded countries, civil society, and the private sector, to address Internet shutdowns and build upon the FOC's past thematic and country-specific statements on the topic. Activities led by TFIS included:

- During the Summit for Democracy in Seoul, South Korea, the Task Force utilised a multistakeholder panel session titled "Access for Democracy: Preventing Internet Shutdowns and Strengthening Democracy" featuring the United Kingdom, Access Now, and other expert speakers, to draw attention to the FOC's activities to address Internet shutdowns and opportunities to leverage FOC statements on the issue.
- Co-Chair of TFIS, the UK, participated in

a panel on Digital Transformation as an Enabler for Access to Information during the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAL) Global Conference, and reflected on commitments outlined in the Oxford statement on importance of access to information and digital connectivity.

- Task Force members provided input in FOC strategic discussions and continued to advocate for strong language on shutdowns in the Global Digital Compact, in addition to pushing back against attempts to weaken / introduce regressive language.
- The Task Force continued to provide a platform for information sharing on country-specific situations where Internet shutdowns were actively taking place, ensuring FOC diplomats remained informed of the latest developments and actions.
- As part of the 2024 Internet Governance Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, TFIS hosted a Day 0 session titled "Inclusive Multistakeholderism: Tackling Internet Shutdowns", which explored the rising prevalence of Internet shutdowns, their broad impact on society, and underscored need for a multistakeholder approach to address the use of shutdowns in regions across the world.



Panelists during the Task Force on Internet Shutdowns' Day Zero session as part of the 2024 Internet Governance Forum in Riyadh.

## Task Force on AI & Human Rights

The Task Force on Artificial Intelligence & Human Rights (TFAIR) was co-Chaired by Germany and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, and convened stakeholders to exchange information and support FOC dialogue on AI in multilateral processes, such as the Global Digital Compact. In 2024, the Task Force was utilised as a mechanism to facilitate input into the FOC's Joint Statement on Responsible Government Practices for AI Technologies, which was launched during the 79th session of the UN General Assembly.



## Strategy & Coordination Meetings (SCM)

### Geneva, Switzerland - May 2024

In May on the margins of the WSIS+20 High-Level Forum, FOC stakeholders convened in Geneva for the first Strategy & Coordination Meeting (SCM) of the Netherlands' Chairship. The meeting provided an opportunity for both capital and diplomatic network focal points to explore proposals for FOC engagement in the UN GDC and the Pact for the Future, including key opportunities, challenges, and concerns relating to the negotiations. The Advisory Network facilitated a capacity building session on the WSIS process, including the history, key themes and stakeholders, and what is at stake in the upcoming WSIS+20 review. Member States, Observers, and the Advisory Network participated in a Joint Roundtable discussion which focused on topics including the GDC, engagement in the 2024 IGF, and advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) within the Coalition. The meeting concluded with an opportunity to look ahead at the remainder of 2024, and to hear from the Coalition's active sub-entities on their information sharing and coordination efforts relating to Internet shutdowns, AI, and Information Integrity.



FOC Member State representatives and FOC Advisory Network Members during the first Strategy & Coordination Meeting of 2024 in Geneva.

### The Hague, the Netherlands - October 2024

In October, FOC Members, alongside the Coalition's multistakeholder Advisory Network, and Observers convened in the Netherlands to reflect on the work of the FOC's various mechanisms during the 2024 Dutch Chairship,

as well as to discuss the 2025 Program of Action and specific activities under the upcoming Estonian Chairship. On Day 0, the FOC hosted a capacity building day, focused on enhancing the knowledge of government representatives around Internet freedom, technical standards, and AI, through a balanced mix of high-level discussions, technical insights, and practical skill-building, guided by distinguished experts in the field. On Day 1, the FOC Members reflected on efforts to coordinate FOC engagement in the Global Digital Compact (GDC) process, and identified lessons learned to guide activities around the WSIS+20 review process. They also heard from civil society, academia, and private sector representatives from the Advisory Network about the evolving landscape of digital technology governance, as well as advice around the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, Internet and AI governance, digital public infrastructure and country-specific responses. On Day 2, alongside a review of the 2025 Program of Action, the FOC engaged in a variety of panel sessions, organised by the FOC Task Force on Information Integrity Online, the European University Institute, the FOC Funding Coordination Group and the Media Freedom Coalition.



FOC Member State representatives and FOC Advisory Network members during the second Strategy & Coordination Meeting of 2024 in The Hague.







FOC-AN Members convening as part of the Strategy & Coordination Meeting hosted in The Hague.

As the Coalition's key mechanism for multistakeholder engagement and dialogue, the [Advisory Network](#) (FOC-AN) continued to provide FOC Members invaluable advice on issues and developments in the Internet and digital technology space. Members of the Advisory Network were instrumental in supporting Coalition activities to collaboratively advance a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to the governance of the Internet and artificial intelligence technologies, and address ongoing challenges to Internet freedom. To enable meaningful engagement on priority issues and in relevant processes, the Advisory Network also shared their expertise in internal settings in order to build FOC Members' capacity and knowledge, and represented the network in external events.

## Public Outputs

### Proactive Advice on the UN Convention Against Cybercrime | February & September 2024

The FOC Advisory Network published two pieces of proactive advice on the UN Convention Against Cybercrime. In February, the publication reinforced a call from the FOC-AN to FOC Member States for strong safeguards and human rights protection in the Convention, and raised a number of concerns as negotiations of the text took place in New York. Following the adoption of the Convention by the UN Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime in August, the Advisory Network issued further proactive advice to call for governments to vote against the Convention's adoption at the UN

General Assembly, referencing concerns including the draft Convention's broad scope and lack of robust safeguards.

## Engagement with the FOC

The Advisory Network continuously contributed to the implementation of the 2024 Program of Action, and supported the Coalition's work and development of public outputs, exemplifying the importance of meaningful multistakeholder collaboration. The Advisory Network engaged with the Coalition Members through various activities, including:

- Participating in and/or co-Chairing the FOC's sub-entities;
- Developing proactive and reactive advice on Internet governance, AI governance, the Global Digital Compact (GDC), Digital Public Infrastructure, the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, and country-specific cases of digital and human rights abuses;
- Providing information and briefings for FOC Governments on the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, UN Human Rights Council resolutions, recommendations for the UPR;
- Raising Member States' awareness of countries conducting Internet shutdowns and violating human rights;
- Providing input into a number of (written) FOC outputs;
- Participating in external panels and events; and,
- Supporting the implementation of the report on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the FOC.



