Attended: Estonia (FOC Chair), Denmark, Finland, Ghana, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States; the Support Unit.

Welcome / Opening Remarks

- The SU welcomed all Members to the third Steering Committee (SC) meeting of 2025 under the chairship of Estonia. A brief introduction was done for the new point of contact joining from Denmark.

Housekeeping

- The Support Unit provided **internal updates** including:
  - Following a successful review process that concluded earlier this year, Taiwan's extended Observership will be announced on the FOC website.
  - SC Members were asked to review the list of FOC and prospective Members for outreach and volunteer support by email to the FOC SU.
    - The list will be reshared again with the minutes of this meeting, and Members will be encouraged to let Estonia and the Support Unit know whether they have capacity to support in outreach efforts.
  - SU provided an overview of **FOC outputs and deadlines**:
    - The deadline to provide input to the Zero Draft of the FOC Rights-Respecting DPI Principles was 31 March, however this has been extended to **Friday, 16 May**.
    - The public consultation for the draft DPI Principles has also been shared on the FOC website, and Members are encouraged to amplify this to interested stakeholders.
    - The UK is continuing efforts to address redlines for the Joint Statement on Protecting Human Rights Online and Preventing Internet Shutdowns in Times of Armed Conflict, with the next version of the draft to be shared for sign-off shortly.
  - SU provided an overview **of upcoming events:**
    - **4 April:** FOC New York Network Discussion on the AI Scientific Panel and Global Dialogue | virtual
    - **29 April - 1 May**: Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum | Lusaka, Zambia
      - FOC Multistakeholder Dialogue on Digital Public Infrastructure: Promoting Inclusion and Safeguarding Human Rights
      - FOC Intergovernmental Dialogue
      - FOC Evening Reception
    - **12 - 14 May:** EuroDIG | Strasbourg, France
      - **12 May 2025 | 13:00 - 14:15 CEST**: Freedom Online Coalition's Principles on Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure - consultation with EuroDIG community
    - **23 - 27 June**: Internet Governance Forum | Lillestrøm, Norway *(hybrid)*
      - The FOC has submitted a number of session proposals, including:
        - Day 0:
          - Strengthening Multistakeholderism in the Global South to Safeguard Human Rights Online (co-organised with Tech Global Institute)
        - Open Forums:
          - Shaping Global AI Governance Through Multistakeholder Action (TFAIR)
          - How Technical Standards Shape Connectivity and Inclusion?
        - Workshops:
          - Ensuring Digital Inclusion with Rights-Respecting DPI

- - ■ From Countering to Building: Information Integrity (co-organised with former co-chairs of TFIIO and Wikimedia Foundation)
    - ○ FOC IGF Village Booth

Program of Action 2025
- Estonia outlined its plans for continuing the implementation of the 2025 Program of Action, noting the following:
  - ○ Goal 1
    - ■ Recent information sharing and coordination events, including the *FOC Multistakeholder Consultations* in Geneva, which brought together a range of experts to discuss issues and develop recommended next steps, which will be used to update the background paper.
    - ■ The *Digital Inclusion & Connectivity - Delivering on the Global Digital Compact* event held in New York in mid-March.
    - ■ An overview of a potential upcoming FOC breakfast meeting on the sidelines of CSTD in April to discuss the resolutions on WSIS and Science, Technology and Innovation.
  - ○ Goal 2
    - ■ Drafting of the principles for rights-respecting digital public infrastructure. Following RightsCon 2025, the public consultation for input is ongoing and will be complemented by regional dialogues held at the Digital Rights Inclusion Forum (DRIF) and EuroDIG, with a view to be launched at the Tallinn Digital Summit in October 2025.
  - ○ Goal 3
    - ■ Facilitating outreach to both Global South Members and prospective Members, seeking support from the SC to advance these efforts.
    - ■ Estonia invited SC members to support in identifying additional countries where engagement could be pursued.
- The US, Netherlands and Switzerland expressed gratitude for the events held in Geneva and New York, particularly around the value in carving out spaces for these extensive discussions and encouraged a follow-up to the event held in Geneva.
- The US shared internal feedback around how the FOC centers itself as a human rights-based organization or a cyber & digital process-based organization, and that this would likely affect which teams would be engaging in discussions.
  - ○ Estonia agreed on the importance to ensure discussions are grounded in human rights frameworks, particularly when discussing processes such as WSIS.
  - ○ The Netherlands agreed the emphasis should be on human rights frameworks in FOC discussions, but there is a need to ensure stronger coordination with technical teams as well.
- The US also noted that there was not sufficient time to discuss outreach to Global South countries, and emphasised the importance to ensure the FOC continues to prioritise this in the future.
- The US also raised the question of whether capacity needs to be built in Geneva or whether this should remain in New York.
  - ○ Estonia and the Netherlands agreed on the importance of building capacity in New York as well, and highlighted upcoming events which could support this.

Discussion Items:

FOC Engagement in the WSIS+20 Process

- The SU provided a recap of the FOC Multistakeholder Workshop on WSIS+20 in Geneva that took place earlier this month, encouraging Members to review the report shared via e-mail and noting the following:
  - Last Tuesday, the WSIS modalities resolution was adopted unanimously in the UN General Assembly.
    - UNDESA provided a provisional timeline for the next steps of the process, including:
      - **End of March**: Adoption of the modalities resolution in the UN General Assembly, fulfilling the ICT4D Resolution requirement.
      - **Early April**: CSTD session (WSIS and STI resolutions)
      - **Early May**: Reappointment of co-facs expected, with DESA providing secretarial support for the roadmap and an elements/background paper.
      - **June:** Internet Governance Forum (Norway).
      - **June**: UNESCO meeting on AI in public services; potential stakeholder consultations.
      - **July**: WSIS High-Level Event (HLE); regional consultations feeding into the elements paper.
      - **July - August** : Publication of the Elements Paper
      - **October**: Release of the **zero draft** of the WSIS+20 outcome document, which will be based on the WSIS+10 outcome document. Stakeholder consultations expected before this, including one in June/July.
      - **November-December**: Informal negotiations on draft outcome document.
      - **15 - 16 December**: WSIS+20 High-Level Event (HLE) in New York, focusing on stocktaking from the WSIS+10 outcome document and identifying key progress areas.
  - Next steps for the FOC identified in Geneva included:
    - Further refining the **Food for Thought** paper, led by Netherlands, Estonia and Switzerland, to focus on integrating human rights and multistakeholder approach in the process to inform FOC Members' positions and language. Estonia and the SU will be circulating the paper for input from Members.
      - Switzerland flagged that they are currently developing a second version of their non-paper on WSIS Plus and holding informal consultations with other countries for input, and encouraged other Members to do the same where possible.
    - Highlighting the FOC as a platform to be leveraged for stakeholder engagement throughout the WSIS+20 process, by hosting a series of multistakeholder consultations.
- Estonia noted that some of the future conversations about FOC engagement in WSIS should be held online in order to ensure broad and inclusive participation, particularly from Global South Members, and flagged that ensuring the GDC and WSIS processes are able to have meaningful integration of multistakeholder perspectives had been highlighted as a concern by the Advisory Network.
- The SU highlighted that Estonia, Switzerland and Canada have opened up their official delegations for CSTD to non-governmental stakeholders.
  - Estonia encouraged all Members to provide information to the Support Unit about the stakeholders who will be included in their delegations for upcoming discussions.
- Switzerland highlighted the WSIS+20 Five-Point Plan, a cross-community effort to help operationalise the WSIS modalities, published last week, and endorsed by 101 civil society organisations and 46 experts.

Approach to upcoming events
- The SU provided an overview of upcoming opportunities for the FOC to bolster outreach efforts and engage with digital rights communities globally:
  - **29 April - 1 May:** Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum
    - Multistakeholder consultation (DPI) & intergovernmental dialogue
  - **12 - 14 May**: EuroDIG

- - ■ Multistakeholder consultation (DPI) & possible CoE information-sharing session
    - ○ **23 - 27 June**: Internet Governance Forum
      - ■ FOC Strategy & Coordination Meeting (SCM)
- The SU encouraged Members to reach out to Estonia and the Support Unit about potential prospective countries to support outreach to (see Annex: SC Outreach List).
- **DRIF:** Estonia provided an update on upcoming DRIF plans, noting that invitations to governments has been sent out at the end of last week.
  - ○ The SU requested any Members with active contacts in South Africa, Zambia, Namibia and Botswana to inform the Support Unit in order to establish bilateral meetings during DRIF in April.
- **IGF:** Following the poll circulated to Members, the second SCM under the Estonia Chairship will be held on the margins of the IGF in Norway, June 2025.
  - ○ The US noted the value of capacity-building training as part of the agenda for the SCM and ensuring this is communicated to relevant government representatives in the lead-up to the IGF.
    - ■ The SU provided an update on the Learning Hub and capacity-building training which will be launched over the next few weeks. *[Please note more information has been included in the accompanying email.]*
  - ○ Denmark encouraged hosting the SCM over multiple days to ensure there is enough time and space to have wider discussions on issues beyond WSIS and GDC, such as Internet shutdowns.

AOB

- Estonia provided the following updates on Advisory Network (FOC-AN) outputs:
  - ○ The FOC-AN are developing a paper on recent changes in the funding landscape, which will be shared with FOC Members for review and to identify potential next steps.
  - ○ The deadline for the Proactive Advice on undersea cables has been extended to 19 April to allow sufficient time for this to be developed and shared, and it will likely be supported by a learning call, with more information forthcoming.