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

Welcome / Opening Remarks

- The Support Unit (SU) welcomed FOC members to the eight Steering Committee (SC) meeting of 2024, and introduced new points of contact representing Germany and Ghana.

Housekeeping

- The SU provided several housekeeping updates, including:
  - The second draft of the FOC Joint Statement on Responsible Government Practices for AI Technologies is open for redline comments by **Monday, 2 September.**
  - Colombia submitted a letter of intent to join the Coalition, triggering the official application process.
  - The SC was asked to provide feedback on the [Proposal to Operationalise Self-Reporting on Internet Freedom in the UPR](#) developed by the SU, in advance of the document being finalised and proceeding to a pilot phase.
  - Registration for the second FOC Strategy & Coordination Meeting (SCM) of 2024, taking place in The Hague from 22-24 October, has opened.

Action>> Members to provide redline comments to the Second Draft of the FOC Joint Statement on Responsible Government Practices for AI Technologies by **15.00 UTC, Monday 2 September.**

Action>> SC Members to provide comments in response to Colombia's intention of joining the FOC by **EOD Thursday, 5 September.**

Action>> FOC Members to register their in-person or virtual attendance to the upcoming FOC SCM by **Wednesday, 18 September** via the [following form](#).

Program of Action / Chairship 2024

- The Netherlands (NL) provided updates on their Chairship and PoA 2024 implementation:
  - Updates on the FOC Regional Dialogues:
    - The third Regional Dialogue session was held during the Asia-Pacific Regional IGF (APrIGF) in Taipei on 23 August.
      - The event successfully convened a diverse range of stakeholders, and highlighted pressing topics in the region including disinformation, the use of regulation for digital repression, the use of Internet shutdowns, and artificial intelligence.
      - Key insights will be captured in a report and feed into a discussion during the SCM which will reflect on findings from the three dialogues and explore the value of holding regional dialogues during future Chairships.
  - Updates on upcoming events:
    - Invitations to the FOC Ministerial side-event, taking place on **Monday, 23 September** at 11.30-13.00 EDT, have been circulated via the Netherlands' Mission in New York to all Coalition Member States in addition to prospective Members.

- The draft programme for the October FOC SCM will be shared in advance of the September SC monthly call and welcome members' input.

Discussion Items

FOC Rapid Response Actions - Venezuela
- The Support Unit noted that the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) provided proactive advice to the FOC and held a briefing call on the situation relating to digital and human rights abuses in Venezuela.
  - The Support Unit highlighted the FOC Rapid Response Toolkit provides a suite of options that could be pursued in response to a country-specific situation.
- The Netherlands noted they have reached out to LATAM FOC Members on their position towards a potential country-specific statement on Venezuela, and will proceed with scheduling a bilateral call with Argentina and Costa Rica.
  - The Netherlands noted that there are a number of internal obstacles to leading on the development of a statement, but they remain open to hearing Members' suggestions and exploring opportunities for a potential statement.
- The US noted their support for an FOC statement on the situation in Venezuela, and offered to provide assistance to conduct outreach to LATAM Member States.
  - The US noted internal considerations in regard to being the sole-penholder of a joint statement, and underscored the importance of involving regional governments in any process to develop an FOC output on the issue.
    - The Netherlands highlighted the importance of conducting outreach to Mexico, and requested SC Members to inform them if they are able to support outreach efforts.
  - In addition, the US noted the potential of being a co-drafter of a statement, and their general willingness to support the drafting process.
- The UK noted their support of the statement, and flagged that a number of internal considerations means they will be unable to lead the drafting of an FOC output on the matter.
- Canada noted their support for a country specific statement on Venezuela, and emphasised the preference for a Member in the region to lead the development of a statement, along with participation from the FOC-AN.

Action>> SC Members are requested to liaise with the Netherlands if they are able to support outreach efforts to Mexico in relation to a potential FOC response to the situation in Venezuela.

FOC Engagement in the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS)+20 Review Process

- The Support Unit noted the 2024 Program of Action includes the WSIS+20 review as one of the priorities under Goal 1, to advance a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to the governance of digital technologies.
- The US suggested hosting a discussion to reflect on FOC coordination efforts for the Global Digital Compact (GDC) during the next SC call or the upcoming SCM, to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
  - The US noted it would be helpful to specifically hear from FOC Members of the G77, and EU Members to learn how coordination efforts progressed in unison with FOC coordination.
- Denmark supported the suggestion of an evaluation of FOC coordination in negotiations at the UN level, and flagged it would be beneficial to start coordination and information sharing efforts at an earlier stage in the leadup to the WSIS process.

- ○ Denmark also noted the benefit of additional learning calls to enhance Members' understanding of what is at stake and how the process will proceed.
  - ○ The Support Unit noted the WSIS session held during the May SCM in Geneva, and referenced the SCM report which captures a [summary of the session on p.7](#).
- The Netherlands noted the potential to utilise Day 0 of the upcoming SCM to include a capacity building element on the WSIS process, and highlighted a stocktake of the GDC will be included in the agenda.
- Switzerland noted the benefit of FOC coordination and how we can enhance engagement, and host further capacity building sessions that focus on areas for engagement in WSIS and looking ahead to next steps.
- The Support Unit noted that stakeholders have begun coordinating input and joint messaging for the WSIS process, which will commence with an UNGA resolution with modalities following the appointment of co-facilitators.
  - ○ The Support Unit noted that the discussion around modalities may be a practical first area of focus for Members to consider, as the resolution will frame the way that different stakeholder groups will engage in the process and is in line with the FOC's commitment to multistakeholderism.
- The US asked Members to share further information on what they require in terms of coordination within the FOC and what would be most helpful for the FOC in serving this role.
  - ○ Denmark noted the FOC could be used to further align on specific issues and challenges as they arise, and to facilitate this through more regular check-ins throughout the process.
  - ○ Canada noted the need to further leverage the cross-regional nature of the FOC, with the opportunity to align positions and to also better understand the positions of G77 FOC Member States.
  - ○ The Netherlands further emphasised the need to further engage FOC Members from the global South, and noted the potential to provide concrete toolkits, to build capacity, and to help guide priorities.
  - ○ The US noted that a key benefit of joining FOC coordination calls is to understand perspectives outside of like-minded groupings with which they often engage, and to hear from a diverse range of governments.
    - ■ The US suggested facilitating an SCM discussion on how to further enhance engagement in the FOC from Members in various regions, and noted that the recent regional dialogues have been a good start to make progress.

FOC Response to Civil Society Concerns Regarding the Internet Governance Forum

- The Support Unit noted that the May SCM included a discussion with the FOC-AN on engagement in the upcoming global IGF (15-19 December), which further highlighted the proactive advice shared by the FOC-AN.
  - ○ The Support Unit noted that the FOC now has four IGF sessions confirmed.
- The Support Unit noted the Netherlands as Chair of the FOC has taken on the responsibility to engage with the IGF Secretariat and host country.
- The Netherlands provided an update of the Dutch Cyber Ambassador's intention to hold a meeting with the MAG member from Saudi Arabia, and briefed on the meeting held with the IGF Secretariat, where civil society concerns were raised.
  - ○ The Netherlands noted that the IGF Secretariat was reassuring on pressing issues including visas, VPNs, and concerns for the LGBTQI+ community.
- The Netherlands suggested a way forward could be to develop both internal and public messaging on the importance of the IGF and its open character, or to draft either an FOC

statement or press release on the importance of the IGF as an open, inclusive, and multistakeholder forum.

- The US noted support for the idea of utilising external communications channels to amplify the FOC's position in regard to multistakeholder participation and the protection of human rights online in the form of a press release or article.
- The UK queried if an external communications approach would be to reassure civil society about attendance or to amplify the message to civil society who have already taken a position on attendance.
- Canada noted interest to engage and collaborate on an external communications effort, and highlighted that such efforts would align well with a 2025 RightsCon session Canada will host on the future of the global multistakeholder model for cyber and digital governance.

- The Netherlands raised the option to provide concrete support in regard to digital tools, VPNs, and digital security, to civil society organisations who are still considering their attendance in the IGF.

- The Support Unit suggested compiling a list of tools that are accessible and that FOC Members could offer civil society to support their engagement.

Action>> The Netherlands to share updates and readouts from bilateral engagements with the IGF secretariat and IGF host country.