

FOC Steering Committee Monthly Meeting #9 2024

Wednesday, 2 October | 14.00 - 15.00 UTC

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 ninth Steering Committee (SC) meeting of 2024, and noted this to be the last meeting of the SC before the Strategy & Coordination Meeting in The Hague (22-24 October).

Housekeeping

- The SU provided housekeeping updates, including:
 - A recap of the FOC UNGA 79 Ministerial side-event on AI for Humanity;
 - The [announcement of the FOC Joint Statement on Responsible Government Practices for AI Technologies](#);
 - The FOC [welcoming Colombia as its 41st Member](#).
 - Estonia's [public announcement of their 2025 Chairship](#).
 - The FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) elected Veronica Ferarri (APC) and Elonnai Hickock (GNI) as the new FOC-AN co-Chairs, with a further run-off vote to elect a 3rd co-Chair to be held for stakeholder balance.
- The SU also provided a breakdown of all upcoming deadlines:
 - SC to provide comments to the Zero Draft of the FOC Program of Action 2025 by **COB UTC Wednesday, 2 Oct.** *[Please note this deadline has passed.]*
 - SC to provide comments to the First Draft of the FOC Joint Statement on Venezuela by **EOD Monday, 7 Oct.** *[Please note this deadline has passed.]*
 - SC to receive the final draft of the **FOC Joint Statement on Technical Standards and Human Rights** for sign-off. *[Please note that the final draft will be going to silence procedure on Tuesday, 8 October morning UTC.]*

Program of Action / Chairship 2024

- The Netherlands provided updates on their Chairship and PoA 2024 implementation:
 - The Netherlands thanked Members for their participation at the successful FOC UNGA79 High-Level Week side-event, "AI for Humanity: Charting the Global Course for Human Rights-Based Governance"; noting the event's timely alignment with the adoption of the Global Digital Compact and the publication of the HLAB-AI report.
 - The Netherlands also highlighted the bilateral engagement in relation to the upcoming Joint Statement on Technical Standards & Human Rights, which is aimed to be publically launched at the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-24).
 - As part of outreach efforts the Netherlands noted:
 - Their continuous communication with Colombia as the latest Member of the Coalition;
- The United States proposed encouraging Colombia to join the Steering Committee in 2025.
 - The Netherlands acknowledged Colombia's current capacity constraints and noted that they will raise this proposal for further consideration.
- Estonia provided further updates on their upcoming Chairship in 2025:
 - The Zero Draft of the PoA has been circulated to the SC and Estonia is looking forward to feedback from all Members.

- Estonia emphasised their intent to focus on two main priorities: ongoing digital and Internet governance processes, and digital public infrastructure.
 - Should Members wish to take the lead on additional priorities, this can be discussed during the upcoming SCM.
- After consolidating feedback from the SC, the revised draft will be shared with the FOC and FOC-AN for further input, with the aim to finalise the PoA by mid-November, ahead of the Tallinn Digital Summit (19-20 November).
- Estonia noted that Day 2 of the Summit will focus on global processes and proposed that the SC in-person meeting be held on Day 1. Invitations for the event will be issued by the Netherlands.

Action >> Netherlands to coordinate with Estonia on the invitations to the Tallinn Digital Summit.

Discussion Items

FOC Strategy & Coordination Meeting (SCM). The Hague

- The SU provided an outline of the agenda:
 - Day 0 (Tuesday, 22 October) will pilot the upcoming FOC capacity-building program for FOC points of contact. In the evening, a public event and reception will be co-hosted by the Netherlands, FOC-AN member Freedom House, and the FOC, showcasing key findings from the 2024 *Freedom on the Net* report.
 - Day 1 of the SCM (Wednesday, 23 October) will feature sessions to review the FOC's efforts in advancing key priorities within the Global Digital Compact, discuss the WSIS+20 process, and look ahead to 2025. The day will also include a joint roundtable with the FOC and FOC-AN.
 - Day 2 (Thursday, 24 October) will involve engagements with FOC strategic partners and external stakeholders, providing opportunities to reflect on sub-entity work plans and ongoing activities.
- The Netherlands encouraged discussions at the SCM to focus on:
 - The role of the FOC and the challenges and opportunities for enhancing future coordination, particularly in relation to the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the WSIS+20 Review;
 - Ways to strengthen the relationship between FOC member governments and the Advisory Network;
 - Exploring opportunities to institutionalise regional dialogues in the coming years, with an emphasis on prioritising voices of like-minded countries in the Global South.
- Switzerland emphasised the importance of framing the GDC stocktake by:
 - Acknowledging both the successes and the challenges faced, given the complexity of this multilateral negotiation process;
 - As the focus shifts to the WSIS+20 review, including a discussion on how the GDC will be implemented and how the FOC can contribute to its implementation.
- The US supported Switzerland's point, noting that while the Coalition has historically engaged in process implementation, this approach is new for the current cohort.
 - The US highlighted the value of gathering more information on the WSIS+10 Review and how the FOC governments coordinated their input during that process, as opposed to the coordination during the GDC negotiations. This comparison could provide valuable lessons as preparations for the WSIS+20 Review move forward.
 - The US also recommended breaking down the various UN bodies and clarifying the FOC's role in engaging with these bodies to ensure effectiveness and alignment with the differing positions of governments.

FOC Rapid Response Actions - Venezuela

- The SU noted that following the FOC-AN's proactive advice and briefing regarding the human rights situation in Venezuela, the Netherlands has taken the lead, in collaboration with Canada, to draft a Joint Statement on Venezuela.

- The Netherlands noted that the First Draft of the statement has been shared with the Coalition for feedback. Together with Canada, they are hopeful of reaching consensus on the statement, as initial feedback from the Coalition has been positive.
- Switzerland inquired about outreach efforts to Mexico and Colombia as key countries in the region, and whether there are alternative platforms for publishing the statement besides the FOC website.
 - Colombia will be approached during an upcoming call with the NL and Canada, while Canada is also conducting outreach to other Latin American members to gather regional feedback.
 - As for alternative avenues to publish the statement, the Netherlands noted that no specific options are under consideration at the moment.

AOB

Debrief of the UNESCO Digital Platform Governance conference held in Dubrovnik in June

- The Netherlands provided updates on the UNESCO Digital Platform Regulation Conference held in June in Dubrovnik:
 - It was noted that the Conference convened regulators from both the Global North and South, providing an opportunity for UNESCO to [launch the "Network of Networks"](#) for regulators following the release of the UNESCO [Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms](#) in November 2023
 - UNESCO has reached out to explore the possibility of organising a debrief in Paris at UNESCO headquarters, similar to the World Press Freedom Day debrief organised by the MFC.
 - The Netherlands noted this would offer a valuable platform to discuss the mandate on freedom of expression, emphasising the divide between regulators in the EU and US, who have greater access to major tech companies, and how this contrasts with the experience of many regulators worldwide.
 - The Netherlands acknowledged previous concerns regarding UNESCO processes and welcomed feedback from members on the possibility of collaboration.
- The US expressed reservations about this approach, noting that it may not send the right message for the FOC to engage closely with UNESCO, given that the FOC was not part of the initial process and has previously raised concerns regarding UNESCO's approach to developing the guidelines.
 - Switzerland agreed with the US, especially given the FOC's upcoming activities.
 - Germany expressed support for engaging with UNESCO, particularly with regard to the content of the event.

Action >> The Netherlands to update the SC on the final decision regarding the potential collaboration with UNESCO following feedback from SC Members.