

Attendance: Armenia, Estonia, Germany, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland (FOC Chair 2026), the United Kingdom; FOC Support Unit.

Summary:

During the second Steering Committee (SC) meeting under Switzerland's Chairship, the Support Unit (SU) provided updates, including the U.S. withdrawal from the FOC, the ongoing review of the Advisory Network's Terms of Reference, and the outcomes of the pre-Human Rights Council (HRC) Coordination Meeting that took place in Geneva. SU also provided updates on preparations for key events including the Geneva Diplomatic Network Kick-off Meeting, taking place in early March.

Switzerland and the Task Force on AI and Human Rights (TFAIR) provided updates on the implementation of the 2026 Program of Action (PoA), including engagement at the India AI Impact Summit, and the Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Members discussed the focus of the forthcoming Strategy and Coordination Meeting, taking place in Lusaka, Zambia from 4-5 May, and potential coordination ahead of the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance. The SC also considered plans for the FOC's 15th anniversary and a more practice-oriented 2026 Capacity Building Programme aligned with PoA priorities.

Minutes

Welcome / Opening Remarks

- The Support Unit welcomed Members to the second Steering Committee meeting of 2026 under the Swiss Chairship and provided an overview of the agenda.

Housekeeping

- **SU Updates:**
 - The [United States has formally withdrawn from the FOC](#) following receipt of a letter addressed to Switzerland. Switzerland has sent an official response. The FOC website has been updated accordingly, while clearly noting that the Coalition remains open to future re-engagement.
 - [The 2026 Program of Action \(PoA\)](#) was successfully launched on 4 February. The SU thanked all those who participated in the virtual launch, including Switzerland for opening remarks and the Advisory Network (AN) for their contributions. The SU is now following up with Steering Committee Members regarding implementation of the PoA, exploring how they can support and advance the priorities in concrete and operational terms.
 - The FOC Pre-Human Rights Council (HRC) 61 Coordination Meeting took place on 19 February. The session included an overview of Switzerland's Chairship priorities, insights from the Advisory Network on emerging digital rights issues, and a briefing from OHCHR.
 - The SU welcomed the exchange of concrete ideas during the meeting on strengthening engagement through the Geneva Diplomatic Network, including potential joint statements for the June–July Human Rights Council session and possible engagement at the upcoming ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Doha. There was also a proposal to facilitate a coordination meeting among standard-setting bodies based in Geneva.
 - Switzerland thanked participants for the lively discussion, noting that it demonstrated strong resonance of the PoA among Geneva-based stakeholders. In particular, there was notable interest in the Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns in Iran. Members highlighted the importance of leveraging the Geneva network as a liaison platform to encourage additional Member States to opt into the statement.

- **FOC Outputs & Processes:**

- **Diplomatic Networks:** Workplans for the Geneva and New York Diplomatic Networks have been finalised under Swiss leadership. The workplans outline priorities, planned activities, and coordination mechanisms for 2026, and are shared alongside the meeting minutes.
- **FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) Review:** The mandate of the current FOC-AN cohort (2024-2026) will be expiring during the Swiss Chairship, in June 2026. Ahead of launching the next selection process and as a condition to accepting the results of the previous selection, the Steering Committee and FOC-AN have been mandated to review the [FOC-AN Terms of Reference \(ToR\)](#) and align the FOC-AN selection process.
 - The Review Committee has been set up and a first meeting was held on Thursday, 12 February, with a second meeting scheduled for Thursday, 26 February.
 - The Review Committee has agreed to draft specific language proposals for potential amendments to the Advisory Network Terms of Reference. These proposals will be shared with Members for consideration in due course.

- **Upcoming Events & Meetings:**

- **Geneva Diplomatic Network Kick-off Meeting: 4 March 2026, 16:30–18:30 CET at the GIGA Connectivity Centre – Biotech Campus, Geneva.**
 - This session will formally launch the 2026 workplan of the FOC Geneva Diplomatic Network, provide an orientation for Geneva-based FOC members and capital-based representatives, and outline priorities, coordination mechanisms, and thematic areas for 2026, led by Switzerland with the support of the FOC Support Unit.
 - SC Members should encourage their missions in Geneva to attend the event.
- **Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF): 14-16 April, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**
 - FOC has secured a session at DRIF, which is in the process of being shaped. More information will be shared soon.
- **Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD29): 20-24 April, Geneva, Switzerland**
 - A side event 'Operationalizing the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines in the Implementation of the WSIS+20 Outcome Document' is currently under development, led by Switzerland. More information will be shared soon.
- **Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM): 4-5 May, Lusaka, Zambia (TBC)**
 - SCM1 will take place on from 4-5 May on the margins of RightsCon, Lusaka, Zambia
 - A save-the-date was shared with FOC Members and the AN; invitations with full logistical information will follow shortly.
 - SC Members are invited to arrive on Sunday, 03 May to attend an afternoon SC meeting and dinner.
 - SC Members are requested to consider asking embassies to host a reception in Lusaka in the evening 4 May.
 - The SCM agenda is currently under development and will be shared with SC Members, with the aim to discuss at the March SC meeting.
- **Workshop at RightsCon 'Operationalising the FOC Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure Principles': 5-8 May, Lusaka, Zambia**
 - This interactive workshop will bring together policymakers, technical community representatives, civil society actors, and development partners to co-develop practical strategies for putting the FOC DPI Principles into action.
- **Science, Technology and Innovation Forum: 6-7 May, New York**
 - Switzerland and SU are currently exploring engagement via New York Missions.

- **Mapping SC engagement at events:** The SU is circulating a [Google Form](#) (shared alongside these minutes) amongst SC Members to map attendance and engagement around key events and fora throughout 2026.
- **Chairship and Program of Action 2026 Updates:**
 - **TFAIR Activities:**
 - The Netherlands provided an update on recent TFAIR activities, including a session at the AI Impact Summit in India on governing safe and responsible AI within digital public infrastructure (DPI), which featured high-level opening remarks and a multistakeholder panel. Discussions emphasised that AI governance in DPI is not only a technical matter but also one of public trust, democratic legitimacy, and protection of fundamental rights, highlighting the need for transparency, human oversight, safeguards, and effective mechanisms to review AI-driven decisions and address harms. Continued investment in multistakeholder processes and meaningful inclusion of Global Majority perspectives were identified as essential.
 - The Netherlands also reported on a TFAIR-organised learning call on AI standards and human rights, noting that standards provide useful guidance but do not replace binding legislation. The Netherlands noted that a key takeaway from the discussion was the tension between technical and human rights communities, which often operate in different “languages” and policy frames. This highlighted the need for greater investment in capacity building and more intentional cross-disciplinary engagement to bridge these divides and ensure more coherent digital governance outcomes. Germany indicated that further activities are being planned and invited Members to propose topics for future engagement.
 - The SU encouraged continual sharing of information between TFAIR and the Steering Committee to ensure strong coordination around activities.
 - **Updates from Switzerland on the 2026 PoA**
 - **Goal 1: Strengthen FOC engagement in global digital governance processes**
 - Switzerland proposed that the FOC could explore developing a joint multistakeholder statement ahead of the first UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance. The statement could be drafted with input from both governments and the FOC-AN, reflecting the Dialogue’s inclusive nature. Members broadly welcomed the idea, highlighting that a multistakeholder approach would strengthen any FOC messages, while noting practical considerations such as drafting arrangements and the neutrality obligations of the Dialogue co-chairs. Participants suggested that the statement could foreground human rights—particularly freedom of expression—as a core theme.
 - **Goal 2: Address ongoing challenges to Internet freedom and digital resilience**
 - **Joint Statement on Internet Shutdowns in the Islamic Republic of Iran:** The [Joint Statement](#) was published on 4 February, with 26 FOC Members and one Observer signing on. The statement remains open for additional endorsements. Switzerland is coordinating with the FOC-AN on a follow-up learning call; further details will be shared by the SU.
 - **Goal 3: Operationalise multistakeholder approaches to digital governance**
 - Progress on Goal 3 was discussed during the segment on the FOC 15 Year Anniversary (see below).

Discussion items

- **FOC 15 Year Anniversary (sliddeck shared alongside minutes):**
 - A proposal was introduced by Switzerland to mark the FOC’s 15th anniversary in December 2026 through a forward-looking, multistakeholder process rather than a purely commemorative event. The anniversary was framed as an opportunity to reflect on how the Coalition has evolved since its launch on Human Rights Day in 2011 and to clarify its future “value proposition,” particularly in a changing digital governance landscape and amid efforts to broaden participation beyond traditional members.

- Switzerland proposed anchoring the anniversary around Goal 3 of the Program of Action – operationalising multistakeholder approaches – emphasising moving from rhetorical support for multistakeholderism to practical implementation. The concept combines celebration with concrete outcomes intended to strengthen the Coalition’s impact and visibility.
- Two potential deliverables were outlined: a multistakeholder anniversary statement, and the launch of a practical mechanism (such as tools, guidance, capacity support, or funding pathways) to help embed multistakeholder practices in real-world policy processes.
- To shape these outcomes inclusively, the Chair proposed a consultative process built around several regional dialogues held alongside major digital policy events throughout 2026, beginning in Africa on the margins of meetings such as DRIF and RightsCon. These dialogues would gather perspectives from governments, civil society, and other stakeholders – including those beyond the Coalition’s formal membership – to avoid a top-down approach and ensure global relevance. Input would then be consolidated through further consultations with member states, the FOC-AN, and potentially public feedback before final outputs are launched at the anniversary in December, which would likely coincide with the third SCM and Global IGF.
- SC members broadly welcomed the concept, highlighting the importance of both reflecting on the Coalition’s achievements and producing forward-looking, actionable outcomes. Suggestions included aligning the anniversary event with the IGF to maximise visibility, considering ministerial-level participation, and ensuring the initiative addresses broader questions about the future of internet freedom, not only multistakeholder processes. Participants also stressed the need to engage members from underrepresented regions and to demonstrate tangible benefits for countries considering joining the Coalition.
- Switzerland indicated that the proposal remains at an early stage and invited members to contribute ideas, host dialogues, or support implementation. A more detailed concept note will be circulated ahead of the next SC discussion, with the anniversary initiative also expected to feature on the agenda of the SCM in Lusaka.
- **Capacity Building (slidedeck shared alongside minutes):**
 - SU presented the proposed 2026 Capacity Building Programme, inviting initial reactions from SC members as development moves forward.
 - Building on the 2024 Capacity Building Framework and the 2025 Foundation Learning Programme, the new iteration aims to shift from primarily awareness-raising toward more targeted, hands-on and practice-oriented training aligned with the 2026 PoA priorities. Capacity building was framed as a core tool for advancing the Coalition’s mission - strengthening cross-regional diplomacy, supporting effective participation in digital governance processes, and protecting human rights online.
 - The proposed approach centres on three complementary methodologies: deep-dive workshops to build specialised policy and technical skills; scenario-based simulations and tabletop exercises to practise negotiation, crisis response, and coordination under realistic conditions; and structured peer-to-peer learning to facilitate exchange of national experiences and best practices. This model emphasises operational relevance and sustainability, focusing on quality over quantity and leveraging existing learning materials as preparation for applied sessions. Activities are designed to support members in translating expert knowledge into concrete diplomatic action across multilateral and multistakeholder contexts.
 - Delivery in 2026 will be closely linked to Strategy and Coordination Meetings (SCMs), with practical capacity-building sessions held alongside each meeting. Planned themes include responding to internet shutdowns and digital repression (SCM I), AI and emerging technologies in relation to human rights obligations (SCM II), and operationalising multistakeholder approaches (SCM III). These sessions would combine expert input, simulations, and peer exchange, with potential collaboration from external partners. Additional elements - such as online masterclasses or technical bootcamps - may be developed subject to funding and member interest.

- SC members were encouraged to contribute feedback on priorities, formats, and topics, and to consider providing national case studies to support the peer-learning component, which may require advance preparation and cross-government coordination. In the absence of objections during the meeting, the Support Unit indicated it would proceed with refining and implementing the plan while remaining open to further written input.

AOB

- The SU informed the Steering Committee that next month's meeting will be held on Thursday, 26 March, instead of Wednesday.