

# FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN)

## Terms of Reference

*This document was developed in 2018 by the FOC-AN, and approved by the FOC Steering Committee [then Friends of the Chair], to establish the Terms of Reference of the FOC-AN. The document was updated in 2024 and 2026 to reflect the revisions made in the FOC Terms of Reference, and elaborate on the FOC-AN elections criteria.*

### 1. Introduction

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The Freedom Online Coalition (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 Members welcome the participation and contributions of non-state Internet stakeholders in the work of the FOC. Such participation will primarily be channeled through the **FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN)**. The FOC-AN is a platform for multistakeholder dialogue which, independently of FOC members, provides advice on the work of the FOC, organizes multistakeholder collaboration around FOC activities and explores possibilities for cooperation. By joining the FOC-AN, its participants agree to abide by and support the goals and principles enshrined in FOC foundational documents<sup>1</sup>. Participation in the FOC-AN is not a prerequisite for participation in FO Conferences and other events for non-state Internet stakeholders.

### 2. Mandate (as specified in the FOC Terms of Reference)

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The objectives of the FOC-AN are:

- To serve as a mechanism for multistakeholder advice on the aims, objectives and activities of the FOC, and pertinent issues related to human rights online;
- To support the FOC's mission of advancing human rights online through stakeholder engagement;
- To be instrumental in ensuring multistakeholder engagement in the planning and organization of, and participate in FO Conferences, as well as other FOC events and meetings.

Specifically, as per the FOC Terms of Reference, the FOC-AN:

- Is encouraged to regularly collaborate with other FOC entities (section IV, FOCToR) and communicate with FOC Members.
- Is invited to provide advice and recommendations on any and all substantive issues, procedures, and other relevant matters within the FOC's mandate (section IV.e., FOC ToR).
- Is invited to contribute to and participate in FOC sub-entities that make recommendations to the FOC (section IV.f., FOC ToR).
- Can recommend topics for development of FOC statements, and will be offered an opportunity to provide input during the drafting process (section V.a.1., FOC ToR).
- Is invited to participate in FOC annual conferences/meetings/events (section V.b. ToR).

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<sup>1</sup> See **FOC Terms of Reference** for a list of FOC foundational documents and mission statement.



- Can assist with planning, organization, and dissemination of information on FO conferences, as well as other FOC events, meetings and processes, as appropriate (Section V.b.ToR).

### 3. Composition, Appointment and Term

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The FOC-AN consists of (up to) 30 participants<sup>2</sup> representing non-state stakeholders, including civil society, businesses, academics, technical organizations, and other experts seeking to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms online.

FOC-AN members serve two-year terms, and may serve no more than two consecutive terms. Members wishing to serve a second term must reapply through the open application process.

FOC-AN Members are selected through an open application process administered by the FOC Support Unit, guided by considerations including stakeholder group balance, gender balance, geographic diversity, commitment to the values of the FOC, relevant expertise, and expected contribution to the work of the FOC-AN and the Coalition.

In addition to these criteria, the selection process shall be conducted in line with the Coalition's mission of promoting human rights, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and shall take into account the need to guarantee appropriate rotation and diversification of membership. Further guidance on the selection process and the interpretation of the above criteria and balancing rules is provided in the FOC Standard Operating Procedure on FOC-AN Selection.

The FOC Steering Committee shall be notified of the outcome of the FOC-AN selection process.

Membership of the FOC-AN will be published on the Coalition website. Members may terminate their membership by notifying the FOC-AN co-Chairs and the Support Unit in writing. Change of affiliation shall result in a vacancy. Open seats shall be filled through the open application process, consistent with the provisions above.

### 4. Day to Day Management and Working Modalities

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The FOC-AN shall function primarily through online means of communication and coordination.

The day-to-day management of the FOC-AN will be the responsibility of up to three (3) non-governmental co-Chairs. The FOC-AN co-Chairs will be elected for renewable annual terms by the FOC-AN. The co-Chairs shall be from different stakeholder groups and regions and their selection shall reflect gender balance and aim at maximizing diversity. Any FOC-AN member can be nominated or self-nominate for the role of FOC-AN co-Chair.

The primary role of the co-Chairs is to act as neutral facilitators of the FOC-AN as a whole, ensuring that the diversity of views is duly solicited and reflected in any FOC-AN outcomes and outputs.

The co-Chairs shall, inter alia, perform the following functions:

- Facilitating the development of FOC-AN contributions, recommendations and advice;

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<sup>2</sup> Participants will serve in either individual or organisational capacity, where one organisation counts as one participant.



- Convening and chairing FOC-AN meetings and calls, setting agendas, and summarizing outcomes of FOC-AN deliberations;
- Monitoring and encouraging engagement by all FOC-AN members;
- Managing the Joint FOC and FOC-AN Roundtables , including by setting agendas, chairing the calls, and helping summarize outcomes of deliberations.

Administrative support will be provided by the FOC Support Unit as needed.

## 5. Format of Contributions

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The FOC-AN may provide two types of input in accordance with its mandate: 1) proactive advice and 2) advice by FOC request (reactive).

Proactive advice arrived at by consensus may be submitted to the FOC in writing at any time. Individual FOC-AN Members may share independent proactive input with the FOC during joint virtual and/or in-person meetings at FOC Strategy and Coordination Meetings, as well as on the sidelines of the FOConference or other international conferences (see Section 6).

An FOC request for advice shall clearly state the question, its scope and type of input requested, and state a clear deadline for input. The FOC-AN's response should be submitted in writing via the Support Unit, in form of concise text or in text comments. The FOC-AN may decide to submit a joint response or to facilitate input by individual members.

The advice provided by the FOC-AN shall be considered public unless otherwise specified by the FOC-AN or the Steering Committee. Should the subject of FOC-AN advice address or refer to FOC processes or discussions considered as internal or otherwise sensitive by the FOC, the respective FOC-AN advice shall assume the appropriate level of confidentiality. The relevant designation of confidentiality shall be provided by the FOC at the point when the respective information is first shared with the FOC-AN.

## 6. Relationship with the FOC

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The FOC Chair, or another member of the Steering Committee, will be the primary contact point in questions relating to the functioning of the FOC-AN. The Support Unit will assist and facilitate where needed.

The primary means of coordination between the FOC-AN and the FOC will be joint FOC and FOC-AN meetings, open to all FOC-AN members. These meetings will be managed/facilitated by the FOC-AN co-Chairs and serve to exchange information, give and seek advice, and contribute to FOC activities. Where feasible, in-person meetings between the FOC and the FOC-AN shall be organised on the margins of international conferences/ events.

Any advice or recommendation made by the FOC-AN will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt and given due consideration. The outcome of the consideration will be communicated to the FOC-AN within a reasonable timeframe on behalf of FOC Members by the FOC Chair, Steering Committee, or the Support Unit.

## 7. Member Roles & Responsibilities

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Members are expected to play an active role in FOC-AN activities and communications. Members who cannot participate in a call or meeting, may nominate a substitute to participate in their stead.



Members who do not actively participate in meetings, emails, or other FOC-AN activities for a period of at least three months may be invited by the FOC-AN co-Chairs, in consultation with the Support Unit, to step down. A replacement will be found through an open application process, consistent with Section 3 above.

## 8. Amendments to the Terms of Reference

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The FOC-AN Terms of Reference (ToR) can be reviewed by the FOC-AN as deemed appropriate. Suggested amendments to the FOC-AN ToR shall be agreed to by consensus by the FOC-AN and submitted to the FOC Steering Committee for consideration and sign off.

## 9. Funding

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FOC-AN Members serve as non-remunerated volunteers. Reimbursement of FOC-AN members for any travel and lodging costs will be made on the basis of available funds and taking into account financial need. Funding allocation shall be administered by the FOC Support Unit.

