

Freedom Online Coalition

End of Year Report 2025

Highlighting the activities and outputs
of the Freedom Online Coalition in
2025, under the chairship of Estonia

A large, stylized graphic of a globe or network structure, composed of overlapping curved lines in shades of green and teal, forming a grid-like pattern across the lower half of the page.

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Letter from the 2025 Chair of the Freedom Online Coalition

Distinguished Members of the Freedom Online Coalition, the FOC Advisory Network, and international partners,

A Year of Responsibility and Opportunity

It has been a privilege for Estonia to serve as Chair of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) in 2025. This year has underscored both the transformative potential of digital technologies and the growing responsibility we share to ensure that this transformation remains anchored in human rights and democratic values.

Across regions, digital systems are becoming central to how societies function – from access to public services to participation in civic life. At the same time, persistent challenges – including restrictions on Internet access, the spread of disinformation, and the misuse of emerging technologies – continue to test our collective commitment to a free, open, and secure digital environment. Against this backdrop, the work of the Coalition has been guided by a clear objective: to translate shared principles into practical action.

Advancing Inclusive Digital Development

During its Chairship, Estonia placed particular emphasis on advancing inclusive and rights-respecting digital development. A central outcome of this work has been the development of the RightsRespecting Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Principles. Informed in part by Estonia's own experience in building digital public services, these Principles reflect a growing recognition that digital infrastructure is not only technical in nature, but foundational to the protection and exercise of human rights. Shaped through consultations with governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector, they offer a practical framework to support the development of digital systems that are inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

Strengthening Global Digital Governance

In parallel, the Coalition worked to reinforce its engagement in global digital governance processes, particularly the WSIS+20 Review. Through sustained coordination across diplomatic networks and close collaboration among Members, the FOC contributed to promoting approaches that are rooted in human rights and informed by multistakeholder participation. These efforts have helped ensure that the Coalition's priorities remain visible in key international discussions shaping the future of the Internet and digital technologies.

Deepening Multistakeholder and Regional Engagement

Recognising the importance of diverse perspectives, Estonia also placed emphasis on expanding cross-regional dialogue. Engagements held in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe created opportunities to exchange experiences, identify shared challenges, and better reflect regional priorities in the Coalition's work. These discussions reinforced the importance of inclusive policymaking and the value of partnerships across sectors and geographies.

Building Capacity and Partnerships

At the same time, the launch of the FOC's Capacity Building Program marked an important step in strengthening the Coalition's long-term effectiveness. By equipping participants with practical knowledge and skills, the program supports more informed engagement in digital policy discussions and contributes to advancing human rights online in a rapidly evolving environment.



Throughout the year, these efforts were complemented by joint statements and collaborative initiatives addressing key issues, including artificial intelligence, media freedom, cybercrime, and Internet shutdowns. Together, they demonstrate the Coalition's continued ability to respond to emerging challenges with coordinated and meaningful action.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, the need for sustained cooperation remains clear. The pace of technological change continues to accelerate, while risks to human rights online persist and, in some cases, deepen. Addressing these challenges will require not only strong principles, but also continued commitment to implementation, partnership, and accountability.

As Estonia hands over the Chairship to Switzerland in 2026, we do so with confidence in the Coalition's direction and with a continued commitment to its mission. The strength of the FOC lies in its ability to bring together governments and stakeholders in pursuit of a shared goal: ensuring that digital technologies serve people, support democratic societies, and uphold human rights.

Sincerely,
Maarja Kask
Coordinator of Estonia's Chairship of the FOC



FOC Mission & Program of Action 2025

FOC Mission

The Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) is a group of countries committed to the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 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 FOC aims to be a proactive Coalition that works with all stakeholders to drive concrete policy changes and outcomes, and shape global norms to promote a rules-based, democratic, and inclusive world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts.

Program of Action 2025

The Program of Action (PoA) outlines the FOC's priority areas and activities. Estonia led the development of the 2025 PoA, in consultation with FOC Member States and the Coalition's multistakeholder Advisory Network.

The 2025 FOC Chairship was a pivotal year for the governance of digital technologies, with a number of global processes taking place with the potential to strengthen human rights online, and to reinforce existing commitments to the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance. Building on the Netherlands' Chairship in 2024, the FOC further advanced its efforts to foster an open, free, and secure digital future shaped in an inclusive and collaborative manner.

The 2025 PoA outlined the following priority areas and goals:

Priority Areas:

1. Governance and use of digital technologies and the Internet
2. Digital inclusion and digital public infrastructure (DPI)
3. Cross-regional engagement

Goals:

- Goal 1: Advocate for a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to the governance of the Internet and digital technologies
- Goal 2: Advance digital inclusion, including through the promotion of inclusive and rights-respecting Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
- Goal 3: Increase meaningful engagement with Global South governments and stakeholders.



Enhancing Coordination & Coalition Engagement

In 2025, the Freedom Online Coalition focused on deepening engagement, enhancing coordination, and expanding the impact of its work across regions and sectors. Through sustained collaboration among its 42 Member States and with the FOC Advisory Network, the Coalition advanced its mission to protect and promote human rights online, strengthen Internet freedom, and support inclusive, rights-respecting approaches to digital governance worldwide. Some of these activities included:

Regional Dialogues

Following the Netherlands' efforts to establish a structured practice for regional consultations, Estonia spearheaded efforts to facilitate outreach and provide spaces for stakeholders in Africa, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and Europe. These dialogues brought together government representatives, members of the multistakeholder FOC Advisory Network, and regional stakeholders to exchange perspectives on digital governance issues, regional trends, opportunities to advance the FOC's mission and key challenges that need to be addressed to ensure human rights are protected online. The multistakeholder regional dialogues also focused on consultations for the Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure Principles and identified recommendations for FOC Member States in order to further support cross-regional engagement and ensure regional priorities are reflected in strategic discussions and advocacy efforts.

Regional dialogues were held alongside major international and regional events in Taipei, Taiwan (RightsCon 2025); Lusaka, Zambia (DRIF 2025); Strasbourg, France (EuroDIG); Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (CPDP LatAm); and Yerevan, Armenia (Yerevan Dialogue).

Capacity Building Program

In 2025, the FOC launched its inaugural Capacity Building Program, developed by the FOC Support Unit in consultation with experts. The program aimed to equip participants from Member States and Observers with knowledge and skills at the intersection of digital technologies and human rights, strengthening their ability to support FOC commitments and engage in multistakeholder and diplomatic settings. Participants gained insights into emerging digital policy issues, learned to frame digital rights discussions effectively, and received tools to navigate international and regional debates on Internet freedom and rights-respecting digital governance.

The program comprised 11 modules delivered through online self-paced lessons and live webinars with leading academics, policymakers, and technologists. Participants devoted approximately 30 hours to the program and, upon completion, received an FOC Learning Certificate. By combining structured learning with practical skill-building and expert engagement, the program strengthened the Coalition's collective capacity to advance human rights online and uphold FOC principles in an evolving digital landscape.

Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration

In 2025, the FOC continued to strengthen collaboration with international organizations, coalitions, and networks to advance Internet freedom and human rights online. Notably, the Coalition partnered with the Media Freedom Coalition to issue a joint statement on World Press Freedom Day, highlighting media freedom as a cornerstone of democracy and a key pillar of open and resilient societies.



Additional collaborations included joint sessions, workshops, and panels with the UN Office of the Commissioner on Human Rights, the Council of Europe, Fundação Getulio Vargas, the Interledger Foundation, University of Amsterdam, and others, fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange on digital governance and human rights issues.

The FOC Support Unit also joined the International Coordination Group on Information Integrity and Independent Media, coordinated by the Forum on Information Democracy. The group aims to enhance coordination around information integrity amongst different international actors and organisations.

Through these strategic partnerships, the Coalition amplified its advocacy efforts, reinforced multistakeholder engagement, and strengthened its capacity to shape international discussions on digital rights, Internet freedom, and responsible technology governance.

Advocacy

Under the Estonian Chairship, FOC Member States, with advice and input from the FOC's Advisory Network, engaged in a number of initiatives to promote human rights online, address challenges to Internet freedom, and advocate for a multistakeholder approach to digital governance.

A key advocacy outcome and focus of the Estonian Chairship in 2025 was the development and promotion of the **Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Principles**, which outline how governments can design and implement DPI systems in ways that uphold human rights, transparency, accountability, and inclusion. The Principles were developed with input from public in-person and online consultations which included governments, civil society, academia, the technical community, and private sector, and were endorsed by 27 FOC Members and 1 FOC

Observer. The Principles now serve as a central reference point for the Coalition's policy engagement on digital public infrastructure.

The Coalition also issued **4 opt-in and 1 consensus-based joint statements** in 2025, developed by lead drafters in consultation with FOC and Advisory Network Members, on topics including the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, media freedom in the digital age, AI and human rights, and the prevention of internet shutdowns in times of armed conflict.

With the WSIS+20 Review at the center of the Coalition's information sharing and coordination efforts, the FOC also developed guidance to support Member States participating in negotiations under the leadership of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The **Proposals for FOC Engagement in the WSIS+20 Review** outlined strategic priorities to guide FOC engagement in the review process, and compiled relevant UN language, excerpts from previous FOC and FOC Advisory Network outputs, and proposed language to help advance a human rights-based, inclusive, and sustainable digital future. While not an official FOC position, the document served as a voluntary resource to support coordinated engagement by FOC Members and to promote shared principles related to human rights online, inclusive digital governance, and responsible technology use. The FOC facilitated more than 15 multistakeholder meetings, including the FOC Multistakeholder Consultations on WSIS+20 and AI and Data Governance in Geneva in March 2025, to discuss WSIS+20 Review developments and shape its engagement with the process.

In addition, the FOC's Task Force on AI and Human Rights (TFAIR) co-Chairs drafted a statement on the priorities for AI Sections of the WSIS+20 Outcome Document, as well as proposed language to be included in the document.



The final WSIS+20 outcome document reflects many of the strategic priorities emphasized by the FOC, including commitments related to human rights online, inclusive digital governance, and the importance of multistakeholder approaches to digital policymaking.

On the margins of both multistakeholder and multilateral fora around the world, the FOC hosted 15 panel discussions, workshops, and roundtable dialogues to support both the development and implementation of Coalition outputs. These events invited stakeholders from governments, UN bodies, civil society, academia, the technical community, and the private sector to facilitate discussions on priority policy areas and advocate for a rules-based, democratic, and inclusive world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld in online and digital contexts.

Coalition Statements & Other Written Outputs

Joint Statement on the Adoption of the UN Convention Against Cybercrime

In January 2025, the Freedom Online Coalition issued a Joint Statement on the Adoption of the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, with the Netherlands as the lead drafter.

The statement, which was endorsed by all 42 FOC Member States and developed in consultation with the FOC Advisory Network, highlights Members' active participation in negotiations to develop a practical, rights-respecting and appropriately scoped UN Convention Against Cybercrime, and to advocate for the necessity of effective human rights protections and safeguards, which are crucial for building trust and enabling international cooperation on criminal matters.

The statement acknowledges concerns raised about the Convention, and underscores the importance and value of a multistakeholder approach in incorporating perspectives from governments, civil society, the private sector, international organizations, media, and the technical and academic communities in the fight against cybercrime.

Joint Statement Presented at the 58th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

In March 2025, Estonia presented a statement on behalf of 33 Members of the Coalition during the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

The statement expresses deep concern about the deteriorating situation of Internet freedom globally, and the growing trend of intentional state-sponsored disruptions of access to or dissemination of information online. The statement condemns intentional measures taken by States to undermine a global, free, open, secure, and interoperable Internet and digital communications platforms through censorship, shutdowns and network disruptions, and calls on States to address misinformation and the spread of disinformation that affect the enjoyment of human rights by all by discrimination, hostility and violence, as well as spreading hatred, racism, xenophobia, negative stereotyping and stigmatization.

Joint Statement on Behalf of Members of the Media Freedom Coalition and Freedom Online Coalition on World Press Freedom Day 2025

In May 2025, a Joint Statement was issued on behalf of 36 joint Members of the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) and the FOC, and an additional 19 MFC-only Members, to pay tribute to journalists and media workers worldwide, and underscore media freedom as a cornerstone of democracy and a fundamental pillar of open and resilient societies.



The statement reaffirms signatories' commitment to protecting independent journalism and media in the digital age. The statement also highlighted the 2025 World Press Freedom Day theme "Reporting in the Brave New World: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media", calling on governments to develop and use AI in a manner consistent with international human rights obligations, and for all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, to respect human rights and ensure transparency and accountability.

Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (2025)

The Statement, developed by the co-Chairs of the Task Force on AI and Human Rights, was issued on behalf of 24 Members and 1 Observer of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) during the 2025 Internet Governance Forum, reaffirming signatories' commitment to a rights-respecting, human-centric, safe, secure, trustworthy and ethical AI future grounded in human rights, accountability, and the rule of law.

The statement calls on all states and stakeholders, from the private sector, organised civil society, and the academic sector, to support efforts in building global AI governance that earns trust, safeguards freedoms, and serves the public good.

Joint Statement on Protecting Human Rights Online and Preventing Internet Shutdowns in Times of Armed Conflict

The Joint Statement was issued on behalf of 30 Members and 1 Observer of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) during the 2025 Internet Governance Forum. The statement affirms the importance of a global, free, open, secure, and interoperable Internet and other digital communications services in times of armed conflict.

The statement expresses deep concern that Internet shutdowns and restrictions to digital communications services during situations of armed conflict: exacerbate grave humanitarian crises; amplify vulnerabilities and inequalities; disrupt the integrity of the most essential digital communications services and the wider information ecosystem; and, exacerbate or facilitate human rights violations and abuses.

Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure Principles

The Principles, officially launched by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Mr Margus Tsahkna during the 2025 FOC Ministerial Meeting on the margins of the Tallinn Digital Summit, were issued on behalf of 27 Members and 1 Observer of the FOC.

The Principles aim to advance knowledge on frameworks for human rights-respecting, resilient, safe, inclusive and interoperable DPI to promote inclusive connectivity and civic participation. This includes mitigating potential risks, such as multiple and intersecting issues relating to exclusion, discrimination, surveillance and privacy. The principles can help ensure that DPI is built with a commitment to fostering responsible innovation and economic growth



Multistakeholder Events, Panel Sessions & Workshops

RightsCon 2025 | Taipei, Taiwan - February 2025

The FOC hosted two multistakeholder sessions during RightsCon to highlight ongoing activities and welcome insights on trends and challenges relating to the Internet and digital technologies. The sessions included:

- ***From Countering to Building: Finding the Keys to Promote Information Integrity Online***

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the Netherlands, together with the Wikimedia Foundation, convened a roundtable to advance a positive vision for a healthy global information ecosystem. Against the backdrop of growing efforts to counter disinformation, the session emphasized safeguarding freedom of expression while promoting accurate and trustworthy information. Participants were introduced to the Task Force's Blueprint on Information Integrity, structured around three pillars (agency, trust, and inclusion) and discussed how shifting the focus from content removal to strengthening the foundations of the information ecosystem can better support human rights and democracy.

- ***Unlocking Progress through Inclusive and Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure***

This session explored the human rights implications of DPI, highlighting both its potential to advance development and innovation and the risks posed by implementation without adequate safeguards. Referencing global initiatives such as those led by the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology and UNDP, as well as the Global Digital Compact, the discussion examined how digital identity systems,

payment systems, and data exchanges can support public service delivery while respecting rights. Featuring contributions from the Tech Global Institute, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Microsoft, Research ICT Africa, and Access Now, the session emphasized inclusive, context-sensitive design and meaningful community engagement to ensure DPI delivers social and economic benefits while upholding human rights and access to effective remedy.

- ***Regional Dialogue: Asia-Pacific***

The regional dialogue, hosted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, brought together stakeholders to examine challenges in protecting human rights online across the Asia-Pacific region. Participants emphasized the disconnect between traditional cultural frameworks and evolving digital norms, alongside concerns about misinformation, internet shutdowns, and the psychosocial strain on civil society actors. Stakeholders called for more inclusive multistakeholder engagement, stronger government alignment with human rights principles, and greater support for civil society. Recommendations included improving the quality of representation for marginalized groups, fostering collaboration between tech communities and civil society, and reinforcing the role of the FOC in maintaining open, agile, and inclusive digital spaces while raising awareness of the economic impacts of digital rights violations.





RightsCon 2025, Taipei, Taiwan - February 2025

UN Human Rights Council Side-Event: Keep the Internet On! The Impact of Internet Shutdowns | Geneva, Switzerland - February 2025

The FOC's high-level side event "Keep the Internet On! The Impact of Internet Shutdowns", co-hosted by Estonia, the Maldives, and Access Now, took place on 25 February in Geneva, Switzerland on the margins of the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The session explored how the multistakeholder community can collectively draw on their various perspectives and work together towards a holistic understanding of motivations and impacts of Internet shutdowns, as well as the role of the FOC to advance a free, open, and secure Internet.

FOC Multistakeholder Consultations on WSIS+20 and AI and Data Governance | Geneva, Switzerland - March 2025

The Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) convened a Geneva-based multistakeholder meeting to coordinate positions on the WSIS+20 Review, AI governance, and data governance within the broader Global Digital Compact process. Discussions emphasized concerns about transparency, inclusivity, and the risk of increasingly state-centric decision-making, particularly in WSIS+20, where participants warned against duplication with existing mechanisms like the Internet Governance Forum and stressed the need to maintain strong human rights integration and meaningful stakeholder

participation. Key themes included tensions between centralized and multistakeholder governance models, politicization of issues such as misinformation and data sovereignty, and the growing influence of geopolitical dynamics. In data governance, participants highlighted fragmentation across regulatory approaches, interoperability challenges, and the need to prioritize ethical data use, human rights, and development outcomes over narrow economic or sovereignty-driven agendas. AI governance discussions focused on the structure and legitimacy of emerging UN mechanisms, raising concerns about limited stakeholder influence, unclear mandates, weak feedback loops, and insufficient human rights safeguards.



Across all areas, participants called for clearer processes, stronger multistakeholder engagement, better coordination between Geneva and New York, and more precise advocacy strategies to ensure inclusive, transparent, and rights-based digital governance outcomes. This meeting was crucial to developing the Proposals for FOC Engagement in the WSIS+20 Review.

DRIF 2025: FOC Community Dialogue & DPI Consultation | Lusaka, Zambia - April 2025

- ***FOC Community Dialogue***

On the margins of the Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF), the FOC hosted a Community Dialogue bringing together governments, civil society organisations, research institutions, and private sector representatives from the region. Estonia presented the Coalition's 2025 priorities, and participants discussed strategies to expand engagement across African regions, including outreach in diplomatic hubs and identification of potential regional allies. Civil society emphasised the value of in-country relationships and local champions, as well as the development of clear, shareable materials to support advocacy and promote the Coalition's objectives.

- ***Consultation on the FOC Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure Principle***

As part of the DRIF conference, the FOC hosted a consultation on the FOC Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure Principles, which gathered feedback on opportunities and risks in DPI development. Participants stressed human-centered design, universal accessibility, and digital literacy as key enablers of inclusion, while highlighting the need for affordability, trust, and flexibility to adapt to local contexts. Governance, legal frameworks, and

ongoing engagement with civil society were identified as critical to ensure DPI systems are rights-respecting, inclusive, and resilient, reinforcing the Coalition's role in shaping digital infrastructure policies in Africa.

EuroDIG 2025: FOC DPI Consultation | Strasbourg, France - May 2025

As part of its regional outreach, the FOC hosted a consultation at EuroDIG 2025 on the Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure Principles, bringing together government representatives, international organisations, and civil society. The discussion focused on the challenges of implementing DPI across different regions, including connectivity gaps, digital literacy, and governance frameworks. Participants emphasized that digital infrastructure is not only a technological challenge but also a societal one, requiring human-centered, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF) | Lillestrøm, Norway - May 2025

The FOC hosted three multistakeholder sessions during IGF to highlight ongoing activities and welcome insights on trends and challenges relating to the Internet and digital technologies. The sessions included:

- ***Shaping Global AI Governance Through Multistakeholder Action***

Moderated by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the Netherlands, Germany, the Cyber Security Authority of Ghana, and Microsoft convened to discuss rights-based, multistakeholder approaches to AI governance in light of the 2025 Joint Statement on Artificial



Intelligence and Human Rights. The discussion highlighted both AI's transformative potential and its risks to fundamental freedoms, stressing that governance must be grounded in international human rights law, transparency, and inclusive participation. Referencing frameworks such as the EU AI Act, UNESCO recommendations, and the Council of Europe's Convention on AI and Human Rights, speakers called for safeguards across the AI lifecycle and strengthened collaboration among governments, civil society, and the private sector.

- ***How Technical Standards Shape Connectivity and Inclusion***

Moderated by Access Now, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the Cyber Security Authority of Ghana, Diplo Foundation, ICANN (ALAC), Google, and Global Partners Digital convened to examine how to strengthen inclusivity in technical standard-setting processes. Speakers highlighted structural barriers — including cost, jargon, and opaque procedures — that limit civil society and marginalized communities' participation, and emphasized the need to align standards development with international human rights principles. The discussion underscored the real-world impact of technical standards on access, surveillance, and digital inclusion, and called for practical measures such as lowering financial barriers, expanding virtual access, and fostering sustained multistakeholder collaboration to ensure standard-setting processes are equitable, transparent, and rights-respecting.

- ***Universal Principles, Local Realities: Multistakeholder Pathways for DPI***

Moderated by the Tech Global Institute, representatives from the Ministry of Public Administration of the Dominican Republic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the University of the Witwatersrand, the Interledger Foundation, the University of Amsterdam, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, and FGV Law School convened to examine the opportunities and risks of DPI across diverse national contexts. Drawing on experiences from Brazil, South Africa, India, and Estonia, speakers highlighted both the potential of DPI to expand access and drive innovation, and the dangers of exclusion, exploitation, and weak oversight when safeguards are absent.

Yerevan Dialogue 2025: FOC DPI Panel | Yerevan, Armenia - May 2025

The FOC hosted a panel in Yerevan to explore how DPI can promote digital inclusion and uphold fundamental human rights, including privacy, freedom of expression, and non-discrimination. The discussion brought together governments, civil society, and technical experts to examine the role of DPI in bridging digital divides, supporting inclusive access to digital services, and aligning infrastructure with international human rights frameworks. Panelists shared lessons from different country contexts and highlighted policy and design principles to strengthen rights-respecting DPI systems.



The FOC hosted two multistakeholder sessions to highlight ongoing activities and welcome insights on trends and challenges relating to the Internet and digital technologies. The sessions included:

- ***Global Digital Governance & Multistakeholder Cooperation for WSIS+20***

The roundtable brought together representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, ITU, the European Commission (DG CNECT), OHCHR, the Wikimedia Foundation, and the Internet Society. Speakers reaffirmed the importance of the multistakeholder model for Internet governance, particularly in the context of AI governance and growing risks of state-centric control. The discussion emphasized embedding human rights, transparency, and accountability into digital and AI systems, supporting civil society's role in building and sustaining digital public goods, addressing persistent connectivity gaps, and strengthening coordination across global digital policy processes to ensure inclusive and coherent digital cooperation.

- ***Embedding Human Rights in AI Standards: From Principles to Practice***
Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, ITU, OHCHR, IEEE, Women at the Table, and the Alan Turing Institute convened to discuss how to embed human rights into AI standards. The panel examined how technical standards, as part of critical digital infrastructure, can either safeguard or undermine rights such as privacy, equality, and non-discrimination. Speakers emphasized the need to move from high-level principles to practical implementation through interoperable, rights-based standards, multistakeholder governance, harm assessments, and accountability mechanisms across the AI lifecycle, in line with global digital cooperation efforts.



CPDP LatAm 2025: FOC Day-0 Event | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - July 2025

Ahead of CPDP LatAm 2025, the FOC hosted a Day-0 event in Rio de Janeiro to engage regional stakeholders on digital rights, AI policy, and rights-respecting DPI. The three-session event included a regional dialogue on digital governance trends, a workshop on operationalizing transformative AI policy, and a consultation on the draft DPI principles. Participants reflected on challenges such as AI deployments in surveillance and policing, digital sovereignty, inclusion, and the practical realities of policymaking in the Global South. Discussions emphasized participatory governance, meaningful community involvement, and bridging gaps between policy frameworks and implementation.



FOC side event at CPDP in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 2025

FOC UNGA Ministerial Side Event 2025 | New York - September 2025

Estonia hosted the ministerial side-event “Building on the Foundations: Securing the Future of the Open Internet” on the margins of the 80th UN General Assembly. The event convened high-level representatives from FOC Member States, the multistakeholder Advisory Network, and external stakeholders from governments, UN bodies, civil society, and the private sector to discuss challenges to the open internet and rights-based digital governance. Opening remarks were delivered by H.E. Margus Tsahkna, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, who highlighted the FOC’s 2025 priorities, and keynote remarks were provided by Amandeep Singh Gill, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies, and Nabiha Syed, Executive Director of the Mozilla Foundation.

A panel discussion explored digital identity, internet resilience, critical infrastructure, AI governance, and digital public infrastructure, highlighting that technical solutions and resilience are inseparable from human rights, and emphasising the need to close the digital divide, ensure inclusive access, and embed human rights considerations in technical standards and governance.



From Commitments to Action: Operationalising Human Rights-Based Governance for AI and Digital Public Infrastructure | New York - December 2025

During the WSIS+20 High-Level Week, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the Association for Progressive Communications, ICANN, the UN Internet Governance Forum Secretariat, the Swiss Federal Office of Communications, and other government and civil society actors convened at a side event to discuss how to translate WSIS+20 and Global Digital Compact commitments into concrete national implementation. The session emphasized closing the gap between principles and practice through multistakeholder cooperation, capacity-building, and rights-based governance frameworks to ensure AI and DPI systems are inclusive, accountable, and grounded in human rights.



FOC Coordination, Sub-entities, and Other Mechanisms

Steering Committee

The Chairship of Estonia was supported by the FOC Steering Committee (SC), which comprised Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Germany, Ghana, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The SC held monthly online meetings and convened in-person on the margins of global fora, such as the Internet Governance Forum and the Tallinn Digital Summit, to support and guide the Chair in implementing activities outlined in the 2025 PoA. These discussions focused on, among other topics, shaping the FOC's engagement in key multilateral processes including the WSIS+20 review, efforts to increase engagement and conduct outreach to prospective Members, and methods to address

concerning trends and human rights violations through FOC mechanisms.

Diplomatic Networks

Geneva

Under the Estonian Chairship, the FOC Geneva diplomatic network advanced the 2025 priority areas through sustained information sharing, diplomatic coordination, and multistakeholder engagement.

The Geneva diplomatic network played a central role in maintaining coordination, visibility, and policy engagement throughout the 2025 Chairship. This included sustained engagement with UN Human Rights Council (HRC) processes, collaboration with key UN partners



and agencies, and high-level discussions, including the high-level side event “Keep the Internet On! The Impact of Internet Shutdowns”, co-hosted by Estonia, the Maldives, and Access Now on the margins of the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council. Ahead of sessions of the UN HRC, the network convened to exchange insights, share relevant FOC language, and facilitate capacity-building discussions for Member States in collaboration with the FOC Advisory Network. The Members and FOC Advisory Network also engaged in coordination around the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which continued to be underscored as a key accountability mechanism for advancing online freedoms.

Throughout 2025, coordination in Geneva, alongside the New York network, increasingly focused on the WSIS+20 Review process, with leadership from the Netherlands driving coordination efforts. FOC Geneva representatives contributed to capital-led discussions and broader Coalition coordination efforts around the process, participating in more than 15 internal discussions and workshops with FOC Members and the FOC Advisory Network aligned with key WSIS+20 milestones, as well as developments related to the establishment of the UN Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance and the UN Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence. Engagement across the Geneva network was instrumental in developing the Proposals for FOC Engagement in the WSIS+20 Review, a strategic guidance document outlining priorities for FOC Members participating in negotiations.

These engagements strengthened coordination between Geneva-based and capital-level representatives and supported joint advocacy for a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to Internet and digital technology governance throughout negotiation processes.

New York

In 2025, under the Estonian Chairship, the FOC New York diplomatic network focused on advancing coordination around intergovernmental negotiations related to the WSIS+20 Review, and implementation of the Global Digital Compact (GDC). The network served as a key contributor for aligning FOC Member State positions and strengthening information flows between New York, Geneva, and capital-based counterparts. Engagements combined multistakeholder consultations, drawing on expertise from civil society, academia, the private sector, and the technical community through the FOC Advisory Network and wider community, with government-led coordination meetings supporting negotiation processes, including a roundtable discussion on implementing the digital inclusion and connectivity aspects of the GDC.

FOC Sub-Entities

Task Force on AI & Human Rights

The Task Force on Artificial Intelligence & Human Rights (TFAIR) was co-Chaired by Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). In 2025, the Task Force convened stakeholders to exchange information and support FOC dialogue on AI in multilateral processes, including the Global Digital Compact and the UN Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance, and the UN Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence. The Task Force co-Chairs also led the drafting of the 2025 Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, launched during the 2025 Internet Governance Forum.



Strategy & Coordination Meetings (SCM)

Taipei, Taiwan - February 2025

The FOC's first 2025 Strategy and Coordination Meeting, held in Taipei alongside RightsCon, brought together FOC Members, Advisory Network representatives, and external stakeholders to advance priorities under Estonia's Chairship. Discussions focused on coordinating engagement in the WSIS+20 review, strengthening multistakeholder cooperation, and developing Rights-Respecting Principles for Digital Public Infrastructure. Participants also addressed funding sustainability, including proposals to expand travel stipends for civil society, particularly from the Global South, and held a regional multistakeholder dialogue highlighting concerns around Internet shutdowns, critical infrastructure security, shrinking civic space, and overregulation. A side event further explored operationalising the FOC Donor Principles through human rights impact assessments and digital resilience support.

Lillestrøm, Norway - June 2025

The second SCM was held in Lillestrøm ahead of IGF 2025, bringing together FOC Members, the Advisory Network, and partners to coordinate engagement on WSIS+20, AI governance, and rights-respecting DPI. Discussions focused on strengthening multistakeholder cooperation, defending the human rights-based Internet governance model, advancing the DPI Principles ahead of the Tallinn Digital Summit, and ensuring stronger coordination across Geneva, New York, and capitals. The meeting also addressed fundraising sustainability, preparations for 2026 leadership, and emerging priorities including cybersecurity, Internet shutdowns, and humanitarian law.

Alongside the SCM, the FOC hosted IGF sessions on AI governance, inclusive technical standard-setting, and multistakeholder pathways for DPI, reinforcing the Coalition's commitment to human rights-based digital governance.

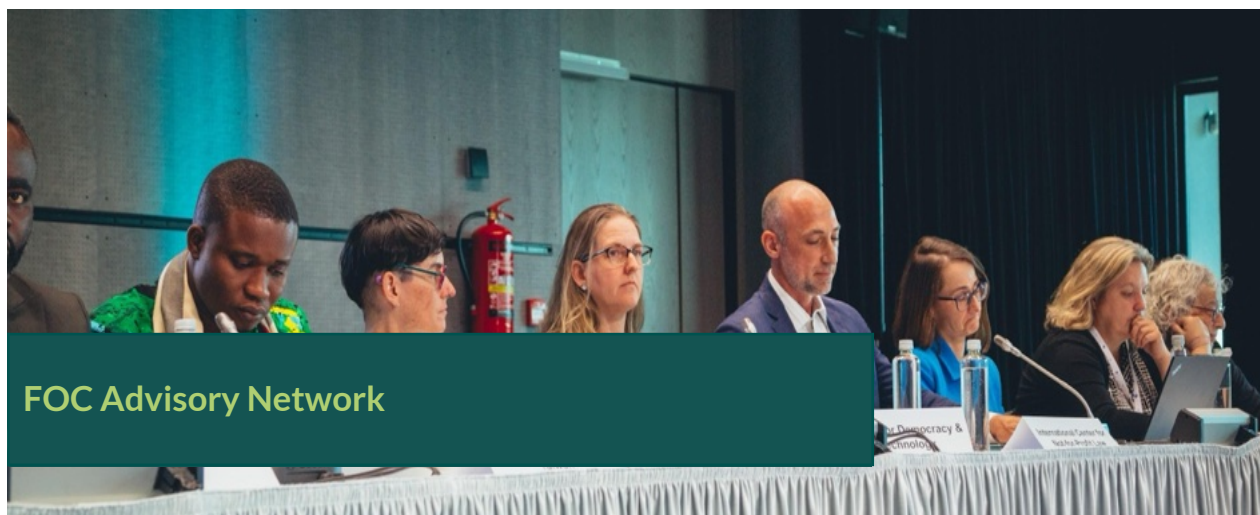
Tallinn, Estonia - October 2025

The third SCM was held in Tallinn on the margins of the Tallinn Digital Summit, bringing together FOC Members, the Advisory Network, and partners to coordinate priorities for 2026 and advance engagement in the WSIS+20 review and Global Digital Compact processes. The SCM featured a Ministerial Meeting, where Ministers and senior officials launched and endorsed the Rights-Respecting Digital Public Infrastructure Principles, reaffirming a shared commitment to human rights-based digital governance and meaningful digital inclusion in the face of rising digital authoritarianism. The convenings also featured a high-level crisis simulation on Internet shutdowns and infrastructure threats, strategic discussions on shaping the 2026 PoA under Switzerland's incoming Chairship, and strengthened coordination with the Advisory Network on AI governance, cybercrime, and multistakeholder engagement.



Tallinn Digital Summit, FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting, October 2025





As the Coalition's key mechanism for multistakeholder engagement and dialogue, the Advisory Network continued to provide FOC Members invaluable advice on issues and developments in the Internet and digital technology space. Members of the Advisory Network were instrumental in supporting Coalition activities to collaboratively advance a human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to the governance of the Internet and artificial intelligence technologies, and address ongoing challenges to Internet freedom. To enable meaningful engagement on priority issues and in relevant processes, the Advisory Network also shared their expertise in internal settings in order to build FOC Members' capacity and knowledge, and represented the network in external events.

Public Outputs

Proactive Advice: WSIS+20 | February 2025

This proactive advice supports the FOC's engagement in the WSIS+20 Review, urging governments to strengthen the multistakeholder model, ensure meaningful stakeholder participation, and advocate for a long-term extension of the Internet Governance Forum. It calls for integrating Global Digital Compact implementation within the WSIS framework to Action, and supported the Coalition's work and development of public outputs, exemplifying the

avoid duplication, embedding international human rights standards across digital governance processes, and prioritizing digital inclusion by addressing persistent divides and advancing meaningful connectivity worldwide.

Proactive Advice: UN CSW69 | March 2025

This proactive advice supports FOC Members' engagement at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW69) by urging stronger integration of gender and digital rights into the Agreed Conclusions. It highlights key challenges including the gender digital divide, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, AI-driven discrimination and deepfakes, and targeted surveillance of women and gender-diverse people. The recommendations call on governments to advance meaningful connectivity, strengthen protections against online abuse, embed human rights and gender perspectives in AI governance, safeguard encryption and privacy, and ensure inclusive, multistakeholder digital policymaking that centers the rights, safety, and leadership of women and marginalized communities.

Engagement with the FOC

The Advisory Network continuously contributed to the implementation of the 2024 Program of



importance of meaningful multistakeholder collaboration. The Advisory Network engaged with the Coalition Members through various activities, including:

- Participating in and/or co-Chairing the Task Force on AI and Human Rights
- Developing proactive and reactive advice on the WSIS+20 Review, undersea cables, and UN CSW69;
- Providing information and briefings for FOC Governments on the UN Convention Against Cybercrime, UN Human Rights Council resolutions, recommendations for the UPR;
- Raising Member States' awareness of countries conducting Internet shutdowns and violating human rights;
- Providing input into a number of (written) FOC outputs; and
- Participating in external panels and events

