

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

Summary:

During the fifth Steering Committee (SC) meeting under Switzerland's Chairship – the Support Unit (SU) provided housekeeping updates on Albania's membership application, the finalisation of the FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) selection process, and the FOC-AN's publication of proactive advice on the RightsCon cancellation and direct-to-cell (D2C) connectivity.

Switzerland and the Task Force on AI and Human Rights (TFAIR) provided updates on the implementation of 2026 Program of Action (PoA), covering FOC engagement at the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance, preparations for the pre-HRC Coordination Meeting on 10 June, a joint statement on freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the forthcoming WSIS Forum session. Updates were also provided on the planned D2C learning call and the FOC Europe Regional Dialogue held at EuroDIG in Brussels.

The SC discussed three substantive items: the 'Geneva to Nairobi (GVA > NBO) Runway' Member Engagement Strategy, the proposed FOC-AN candidate slate for the 2026–2028 cohort, which has been updated based on the discussion and shared for a sign off; and the draft agenda for SCM 2 in Geneva on 9–10 July.

Past Action Points

- SC Members to raise any objections to recommending Albania for FOC membership by COB Thursday, 4 June.
- SC Members to review the revised FOC Advisory Network candidate slate and accompanying documents circulated by the SU, and to share any comments or objections by COB UTC on 5 June. In the absence of objections, the updated slate will be considered approved and formally signed off by the Steering Committee.

Minutes

Welcome / Opening Remarks

- The SU welcomed Members to the fifth Steering Committee (SC) meeting of 2026 under the Swiss Chairship, noting that this was a rescheduled call from the May meeting.

Housekeeping

- **SU Updates:**
 - Albania's Letter of Intent to join the FOC was shared with the SC last month. No comments were received during the first phase of the review.
 - The application package, including a country report, has been shared with the SC for any objections to recommending Albania for FOC membership by COB Thursday, 4 June.
 - Should no objections be raised, Albania's application will be shared with the wider Coalition under an expedited silence procedure of five business days, with the aim of facilitating Albania's participation at SCM 2 in Geneva (9–10 July) if the application is successful.
- **FOC Outputs & Processes:**
 - **FOC Advisory Network (FOC-AN) Selection Process:**
 - The selection process has been finalised. The draft candidate slate for the 2026–2028 cohort was presented to the SC for review and sign-off under discussion items.
 - **FOC-AN Proactive Advice: RightsCon Cancellation:**
 - The FOC-AN has published [proactive advice on the RightsCon cancellation](#), highlighting concerns about impacts on multistakeholderism, civic space, and human rights. It includes recommendations on protecting civil society participation, strengthening multistakeholder governance, supporting Global South hosting of convenings, and ensuring human rights due diligence for major digital events.
 - **FOC-AN Proactive Advice: D2C Connectivity:**

- FOC-AN members have developed proactive advice on governance issues related to satellite direct-to-cell (D2C) technology, addressing emerging regulatory questions around D2C connectivity, which can enable communications during internet shutdowns by bypassing national mobile carriers. The advice sets out options for FOC Member States to help ensure open and rights-respecting outcomes, including early engagement with national spectrum regulators ahead of key decisions at the ITU. The advice builds on the [FOC's Joint statement on internet shutdowns in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Feb 2026) and was circulated on the day of the meeting. A follow-up learning call is planned (see PoA updates).
- **Upcoming Events & Meetings:**
 - **Strategy and Coordination Meeting (SCM) 2 – 9–10 July, Geneva:**
 - Save-the-dates have been shared with all FOC and FOC-AN Members. Registration details will follow. The new FOC-AN cohort will be invited to attend the SCM following the announcement of successful candidates. The draft agenda had been shared in advance of the call and was reviewed under discussion items.

Program of Action / Chairship 2026 Updates

Switzerland provided updates on implementation of the [2026 Program of Action](#):

- **Goal 1: Strengthen FOC engagement in global digital governance processes**
 - UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance: TFAIR Expression of Interest for Thematic Co-Chairship:
 - TFAIR submitted an expression of interest (EOI) to co-chair the thematic discussion on 'Respecting, protecting and promoting human rights: transparency, accountability and human oversight.' TFAIR proposed that its task force co-chair, from ICNL, take on the role. SC Members were invited to indicate whether they had submitted EOI to co-chair one of the thematic clusters or to propose side events for UNGD. No additional expressions of interest were raised. The decision on the proposal is pending from the Dialogue co-chairs.
 - **Joint Multistakeholder Statement: UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance (6–7 July, Geneva):**
 - Eleven FOC Members and two FOC-AN Members provided written inputs on the zero draft. A revised draft will be shared with all Members and the FOC-AN shortly. All AN Members rotating off the AN will be invited to endorse the statement.
 - Armenia shared inputs on the joint statement on the UNGD submitted after the deadline and indicated willingness to discuss these bilaterally if needed.
 - **FOC Side Event(s) at the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance (UNGD):**
 - TFAIR noted that discussions on a dedicated FOC side event at the UNGD were inconclusive and the proposal deadline has now passed. Given Switzerland is already organising a session at the WSIS Forum in the same week and location, this was considered sufficient FOC representation on the topic of multistakeholderism they were considering.
 - Armenia confirmed they will have delegations, likely at Deputy Minister level, to attend the WSIS Forum and UNGD, and expressed openness to exploring FOC side event opportunities during the week.
 - **OHCHR Pre-Event:**
 - The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is exploring a human rights-focused roundtable on AI ahead of the UNGD, potentially as an official pre-consultation. The discussion would focus on the role of states in safeguarding human rights in the context of AI and the relevance of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The FOC has been identified as a partner and invited to help shape the discussion. Practical details, including the format and level of participation, are still being worked out.
 - Armenia raised several additional points under this agenda item:
 - Armenia referred to the Joint Statement on Digital technologies and the rights of women and girls that has been launched together with Estonia and core group of Chile, Costa Rica, France, Japan, Kenya in the Human Rights Council during its

58th session of the HRC and enjoyed wide cross-regional support. Armenia also informed that a resolution on digital rights and rights of women and girls is planned for the September HRC session, with specific clauses calling for cooperation and coordination across UN entities.

- Speaking about the issue of AI and human rights Armenia informed about forthcoming report by the UN WG on Discrimination against Women and Girls which will also be discussed at the side event on 22 June 2026.
- **Pre-Human Rights Council (HRC) Coordination Meeting – 10 June, 15:00 CEST, Geneva:**
 - This meeting hosted at the Swiss Mission will bring together the FOC Geneva Diplomatic Network and other relevant Geneva-based stakeholders. AN members representing Access Now, Article 19, and Association for Progressive Communications (APC) will intervene remotely to brief FOC governments on relevant trends, developments, and resolutions.
 - Armenia inquired whether the link to the Pre-HRC Coordination Meeting on 10 June would be shared with capitals. The SU clarified that invitations had been shared with Geneva-based missions for in-person attendance, while the link was provided only with AN members joining remotely, and that broader circulation of the link may be considered closer to the meeting date.
- **Joint Statement on the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association (FoAA) Report (A/HRC/62/45):**
 - A draft joint statement has been prepared for delivery at the Human Rights Council on 23 June during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur. The report examines how surveillance technologies affect freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including chilling effects, cyberattacks, and related threats. The statement, to be read by the Swiss Chair, was shared with the wider Coalition and FOC-AN for a seven-day review period.
 - Switzerland raised a drafting question for Members' consideration, noting that one sentence alludes to recent developments affecting civil society engagement spaces, understood as an indirect reference to the RightsCon cancellation. Members were invited to indicate whether the cancellation should be referenced explicitly. Switzerland noted a preference for full consensus on the statement but indicated it would proceed on an abstain basis if necessary. SC Members discussed and approved an expedited silence procedure during the call, recognising the need to meet the 23 June deadline.
- **Session at the WSIS Forum – Monday, 6 July, 16:00–16:45, Geneva:**
 - Switzerland, in collaboration with the SU, GPD, and CGI.br, will convene a [session](#) titled 'From ideas to action: the integration of the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines within the broader digital governance processes.'
- **Goal 2: Address ongoing challenges to Internet freedom and digital resilience**
 - **FOC Learning Call on D2C – week of 15 June (date/time TBC):**
 - The learning call will brief Member States on the technical and policy dimensions of D2C satellite technology, including spectrum allocation and governance, and will provide input on engaging national spectrum regulators and shaping strategic positions to help prevent and respond to internet shutdowns. The timing is being coordinated and will be confirmed in due course.
- **Goal 3: Operationalise multistakeholder approaches to digital governance**
 - **FOC 15th Anniversary – FOC Europe Regional Dialogue, EuroDIG (26–27 May, Brussels):**
 - The dialogue comprised two elements: an FOC booth where conference participants shared ideas in writing and short-form videos, and an open session moderated by Switzerland, with contributions from the Netherlands and AN Members. The Netherlands highlighted questions on what the FOC should focus on and what multistakeholderism means to different stakeholder groups. Both elements generated strong engagement and social media content. A write-up is forthcoming on the FOC website.

- Forthcoming Regional Dialogues: Switzerland and the SU are exploring dialogues at APriIGF in Kathmandu, Nepal (4–7 October) and LACIGF in Fortaleza, Brazil (4–6 November).
- Luxemburg noted it had been active in promoting the FOC at various speaking occasions, reminding audiences that 41 – and potentially soon 42 – states are committed to defending human rights and democracy online. The UK expressed support for continued coordination ahead of SCM 2 and Geneva events.

Discussion Items:

- **Member Engagement Strategy: GVA > NBO Runway**
 - Switzerland presented the 'Geneva to Nairobi (GVA > NBO) Runway' strategy, developed in response to SC discussions on uneven member engagement. The concept positions SCM 2 in Geneva as the launch point and SCM 3 in Nairobi - ahead of the IGF (14–18 December) - as the 'destination', with the goal of increasing the number and level of activity of engaged FOC Members over this period.
 - SC Members will each engage at least one priority country, focusing on understanding barriers and shifting priorities. Feedback from these engagements will inform the Coalition's PoA and broader engagement strategy.
 - It was agreed that each subsequent SC meeting would include a standing update on GVA > NBO outreach, to maintain accountability and track progress. The SU will circulate an updated country assignment list following the meeting.
- **FOC-AN: Proposed Candidate Slate for 2026–2028 Cohort**
 - The SU presented the outcome of the FOC-AN selection process. 89 eligible applications were received. Applications were scored across relevant criteria, producing a shortlist of 42. A final slate of 30 was reached following the application of the FOC balancing considerations.
 - The applicant pool was heavily weighted towards the Western Europe & Others Group (WEOG) and civil society; the final slate improves regional and stakeholder balance, increasing representation from all non-WEOG regions and from private sector and technical and academia stakeholder groups relative to the applicant pool. Gender balance was strong and required no corrective action.
 - The Netherlands queried whether free expression perspectives were adequately represented. Following the discussion and additional feedback from SC Members, the SU circulated a revised draft candidate slate for final review and sign-off. Subject to the absence of objections during the agreed review period, the SU will proceed with notifying candidates and inviting the new cohort to SCM 2.
 - The possibility of establishing a FOC-AN alumni network was raised as a way to maintain engagement of former members. The Chair welcomed the idea and indicated they would explore possible options.
- **SCM 2 Draft Agenda – 9–10 July, Geneva (with Day Zero on 8 July)**
 - Switzerland presented the draft agenda for SCM 2, outlining the proposed programme for Day 1 (Thursday, 9 July) and Day 2 (Friday, 10 July) as follows:
 - Day 1 (Thursday): Welcome and speed networking; introduction of the new AN cohort; capacity building session on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) – the workshop originally planned for RightsCon; a presentation from Tech Harms Check; and a PoA mid-year review. The day will conclude with an evening social activity (details to be confirmed).
 - Day 2 (Friday): Coffee and opening; Geneva Week debrief covering the WSIS Forum, AI for Good, and the UNGD; parallel breakout sessions for FOC Members (covering budget and peer learning) and the FOC-AN; additional presentation slots; and a joint closing session exploring priorities for the new AN cohort and future collaboration.
 - In addition, a High-Level Roundtable on Civic Space is planned for Day Zero (Wednesday, 8 July) ahead of the main SCM programme. Switzerland noted that its Geneva mission is too small to host the event and their Ambassador is unavailable that week; SC Members were invited to explore whether their Missions in Geneva could provide suitable space to host the roundtable. The Netherlands indicated it would consult with colleagues in Geneva.

- Members were invited to share any comments on the draft SCM 2 agenda with the SU and to flag any topics they felt were missing or should receive deeper discussion.

AOB

- No additional items were raised.
- The SU thanked all Members for their active participation and reminded the SC of the next meeting on Wednesday, 24 June.