

Human Rights Council – 38th Session

Freedom Online Coalition Geneva Network Joint Statement

Item 2 / 3 General Debate (25 June)

Thank you Mr Vice President, and the Deputy High Commisison for her report. I deliver this statement on behalf of 24 members of the Freedom Online Coalition Geneva Network. The Freedom Online Coalition is a partnership of 30 governments, working to advance Internet freedom. A list of cosponsors to this statement will be placed on the extranet.

We are deeply concerned about the growing trend of state-sponsored Internet censorship, including when conducted in the name of security.

Freedom of expression includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds through any media without impermissible interference by public authorities. Individuals must be free to communicate and choose freely the means to do so. Just as important for the realization of the potential of the Internet are the related freedoms of association and peaceful assembly.

State sponsored Internet censorship has a significant impact on women and girls and other individuals who may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Individuals whose expression and interests are not equally represented by mainstream media sources often use online platforms to exercise their human rights. State-sponsored censorship can deprive these individuals of the core platforms where they access educational resources, express themselves and interact with each other.

We call on all governments to refrain from content restrictions on the Internet that violate international human rights law and to create an enabling environment for free expression and access to information online. States must not restrict, moderate, or manipulate online content, disrupt networks to deny users access to information, or employ internet censorship technologies, contrary to their international obligations.

List of Cosponsors: Australia; Austria; Argentina; Canada; Costa Rica; Czech Republic; Estonia; France; Finland; Germany; Ireland; Japan; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Mongolia; New Zealand; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Spain; Sweden; Tunisia; United Kindgom.