



## **CHAIR'S STATEMENT**

### **Ulaanbaatar, 5 May 2015**

1. The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Freedom Online Coalition, under the Chairmanship of Mongolia, was held in Ulaanbaatar, from 4 to 5 May 2015.
2. We, the members of the Freedom Online Coalition, have had extensive, open, and fruitful discussions on “Internet Policy Making: Best Practices for Promoting Online Freedom,” organized into three tracks: An Internet Free and Secure; Digital Development and Openness; and Privacy and Transparency online. These three tracks have been the focus of work for the FOC’s three multistakeholder working groups.
3. The Participants of the Ulaanbaatar FOC Conference represented a broad cross-section of Governments, private sector companies, and civil society organizations committed to ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the virtual environment, and towards making the internet a secure and accessible platform for all – one that can provide broader opportunities for sharing information, expressing opinions, manifesting one’s religion or beliefs freely assembling, undertaking business, and participating in social life, regardless of time and geographical constraints.
4. The Coalition discussed the challenges facing countries seeking to ensure their communication laws, policies and regulations help to secure the benefits of an open and accessible internet. Our goal was to examine the challenges of translating offline policies into an online environment and to highlight successful examples of policy development for the promotion of Internet freedom. We encourage states to develop and apply progressive Internet policy through inclusive, transparent, democratic processes, consistent with the rule of law.
5. We also discussed the importance of Internet freedom in Mongolia and the region, emphasizing the importance of protecting and promoting freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and privacy online. The contributions and insights of civil society and private sector participants were particularly valuable in this regard. We reiterate our commitment to the protection and promotion of Internet freedom in the region.
6. Millions of new people come online each and every day, creating unprecedented opportunities for economic growth, development and civic engagement. Realizing this

tremendous potential requires an unequivocal commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and the free exchange of data across borders. Efforts to curtail fundamental freedoms and human rights online through censorship, illicit surveillance, and the adoption of restrictive legislative measures undermine the Internet's vast potential. "As a Coalition, we will continue to advocate against such efforts and to promote the full enjoyment of human rights online".

7. We remain deeply concerned about the recent increase in the number and types of observed restrictions on access to social media platforms in a variety of countries and contexts, as expressed in the Freedom Online Coalition's Statement on restrictions on access to social media, issued in August 2014. We reiterate our condemnation on restrictions in violation of international human rights law of content shared via social media, and in particular the wholesale blocking of social media sites, to restrict individuals from exercising their human rights online. [*FOC Social Media Statement, paras. 1,6*]

8. We also remain concerned by the increase in the use of surveillance technology in contravention of states' obligations under international human rights law to interfere with privacy, as expressed in the Freedom Online Coalition's Statement on the use and export of surveillance technology, issued in October 2014. We reiterate that curbing such use of surveillance technology should be an international, multistakeholder effort, and should include the development of appropriate and consistent national laws and policies governing the use and export of such technologies. [*FOC Use and Export of Surveillance Technology, para. 2*]

9. We reaffirm our commitment to respect and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and endorsed in the Freedom Online Coalition's Founding Declaration. We also reiterate our commitment to the Nairobi Terms of Reference and the Tallinn Agenda, which set the framework for the work of the Coalition and its priorities.

10. We are committed to supporting programs, initiatives, and technologies that promote and help to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms online, and recommend other stakeholders to join these efforts.

11. We encourage governments, the private sector, international organizations, and civil society worldwide to continue to share best practices for promoting online freedom, through the FOC and other forums.

12. We congratulate Lithuania, Australia, and Norway for joining the Coalition and we look forward to their contributions to protecting and promoting online freedoms based on our shared commitment to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

13. We wish to express sincere thanks to the Government of Mongolia, as well as the participants, speakers and supporters of the Fifth Conference of the FOC for their valuable contributions in making the Ulaanbaatar conference a success and for their work to advance Internet freedom in all parts of the world. We call on all stakeholders to remain steadfast in their commitment to promoting freedom online.

14. We look forward to the 6<sup>th</sup> Freedom Online Conference in 2016.