**Technology for Democracy Cohort – Concept/Terms of Reference – Aug 2022**

**Context**

Increasingly the digital and online space is where people seek to exercise their rights; this provides opportunities to empower citizens and society overall but also presents challenges that require a multi-stakeholder approach and greater international co-operation including between states, civil society, individuals and the private sector.

**Purpose**

The overarching aim of the **Technology for Democracy Cohort,** as part of the overall ‘Year of Action’ to support the Summit for Democracy (S4D2) process, is:

*‘to promote the use of technologies and digital connectivity to strengthen democracies and enhance the enjoyment of democratic freedoms, and ensure technologies are deployed in a free, responsible, secure, resilient way.’*

**Work streams**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strand one**: **Technology to support open and secure access to the Internet**. | The Cohort members will consider how technology can assist people around the world to retain access to the open, free, global, interoperable, reliable and secure Internet, to enable inclusive participation in the online world, and to promote the enjoyment of human rights online. The work of the Cohort will be in line with principles outlined in the Declaration on the Future of the Internet, and build on existing work by civil society organisations, international groupings (including the Freedom Online Coalition), and industry, to further strengthen the enjoyment of human rights online, and push back against politically motivated government imposed shutdowns and restrictions. |
| **Strand two**:  **Harnessing the potential of technology/data for the benefit of open, democratic societies.** | The Cohort members will take forward activities aimed at enabling the implementation of core shared principles, from protecting human rights, and other shared values, to ensure technologies are developed and deployed in a free, responsible, secure and resilient way which supports and strengthens democracies and democratic participation. It will provide space to consider how new and emerging technology can be used for malign purposes, and consider appropriate safeguards to prevent technologies undermining democracies and democratic freedoms. |
| **Strand Three: Technology for good governance** | This strand focuses on the transformative power of digital technologies for more open and inclusive governance, and more efficient and innovative e-governance solutions. The aim is to explore and share existing knowledge, skills and practices on how countries could accelerate open and interoperable digital governance that incorporates human rights safeguards to protect against the exclusion of marginalised people. This strand will explore the potential for co-design and co-development of these tools with civil society, and the role of assurance tools such as human rights due diligence requirements and impact assessments. Among others, the Cohort´s work supports the global mission of the UN in attainment of sustainable development goals. |

**Leadership**

The Cohort will be co-led by Access Now (lead NGO partner), Estonia, and the UK. Co-lead responsibilities/commitments:

* Overseeing delivery of the overall Cohort and its three Strands by S4D2
* Inviting new Cohort participants
* Convening, facilitating, and co-chairing monthly Cohort meetings, and working group meetings.
* Organisation of public launch and external/internal communication activities of the Cohort, and individual working groups.
* Updating the Cohort Concept/ToR as appropriate
* Decision-making will be achieved through “rough consensus”
* Individual co-leads will not be able to unilaterally block decisions in relation to the Cohort as a whole, or resulting from Working Group activity. Equally, co-leads are not able to block any civil society or private sector organisation from participating.
* Access Now as lead NGO partner will have overall responsibility for recommending civil society organisations to participate in the Cohort, and facilitating communication / engagement activities with civil society organisations.

**Participation**

A cross regional group of countries, civil society organisations, academia and private sector companies will be invited to actively participate in the Cohort [current list at the end of this document]. All participants are invited to propose additional members. Participants are expected to actively contribute to the development and/or delivery of the Cohort outcomes.

**Delivery**

* The work of the Cohort will be practical: focused on real world applications, and possible solutions to shared challenges.
* The Cohort will take forward work across three mutually reinforcing themes, with each work-stream delivering one or more concrete deliverables.
* The Cohort will meet in plenary on a monthly basis either virtually or in-person/hybrid format where there is an opportunity to do so. Cohort participants are invited to propose suggestions for locations/events where in-person/hybrid plenary Cohort meetings could be held.
* Each Strand will be delivered through a working group (WG) co-facilitated by at least one government and lead NGO. There must also be participation from at least one private sector organisation in each WG.
* WG Co-facilitators are responsible for WG composition, outreach, and organising WG discussions and activities. It is anticipated that meetings will be held at least on a monthly basis.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Work-stream WG co-facilitators** | Government(s) | NGO(s) |
| Strand 1 | UK | Access Now |
| Strand 2 | UK | TBD |
| Strand 3 | Estonia | TBD |

* Participation in a WG is not compulsory but the expectation is that organisations that join the Cohort plenary meetings will participate in at least one WG. Organisations can participate in more than one WG.
* Working Group co-facilitators will provide an update to the wider group plenary meetings on outcomes/progress. The plenary Cohort meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss cross-cutting issues / themes.

**Cohort timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Session** |
| 28 July 22 | First plenary meeting of Cohort [virtual] |
| By 19 Aug 22 | Feedback on Strand ideas / specific proposals on outcomes |
| Aug 22 | First meetings of Strand Working Groups |
| 7-16 Sep 22 TBC | Second plenary meeting of Cohort [virtual] |
| 10-11 Oct 22 | TBD – potential public launch and in-person/hybrid Third plenary Cohort meeting at Tallinn Digital Summit |
| 28 Nov – 2 Dec 22 | Internet Governance Forum – Ethiopia [potential hybrid plenary meeting TBD] |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Participants**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Countries | UK, Estonia, Chile, India, Indonesia, Germany, Denmark, Finland |
| Lead NGO partner | Access Now |
| Organisations / companies / entities | Freedom House, Alliance of Democracies, IDEA, OGP, DT Institute, Democracy Reporting International, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, DT Institute, Global Network Initiative, American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, Digital Impact and Governance Initiative, Common Cause, National Democratic Institute, Article 19, Southern Poverty Law Center, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, PEN America, Free Russia Foundation, International Republican Institute, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Committee to Protect Journalists, International Forum for Democratic Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Tunisian American Young Professionals, Amnesty International USA, DoS/DRL, Congreso Visible Uniandes, National Democratic Institute, Global Partners Digital, AIR-Alliance for Innovative Regulation, Hong Kong Democracy Council, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, Stanford Global Digital Policy Incubator, Digital Forensic Research Lab, ANDI - Communication and Rights / Foro Ciudadano de Las Americas, Anti-Corruption Law Program, Washington College of Law, Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, FINESTE, Open Society Foundations, Institute of Public and Private Policies/Albania, Public Citizen, WWC Global, Carter Center, Accountability Lab, Europe Foundation, National Centre for Social Research, The Asia Foundation, Ford Foundation, Netblocks, Doublethink Lab, CEIP, Amazon, Twitter, Cloudflare, Paradigm Initiative, Derechos Digitales, WFD |