

## Background Paper

USAID and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)'s are proposing an Open Forum session to launch the Donor Principles for the Digital Age and begin a conversation about implementing them.

USAID's intention to work with partners to develop a set of Donor Principles for the Digital Age was officially announced by USAID Deputy Administrator Isobel Coleman at the second Summit for Democracy (<https://events.newamerica.org/championingdigitaldemocracy>). The Donor Principles for the Digital Age will outline normative parameters for rights-respecting donor investments and engagements in digital contexts, and provide a mechanism for donor accountability on digital development efforts. The Donor Principles are USAID's Summit for Democracy deliverable under the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, and are being drafted and negotiated in the Freedom Online Coalition with multistakeholder input from the FOC Advisory Network.

USAID and IDRC are co-organizing this IGF event as co-chairs of the Freedom Online Coalition Funding Coordination Group (FOC FCG), where the Donor Principles will initially be drafted between June and October 2023. The FOC FCG was revitalized and relaunched at the FOC Strategy and Coordination Meeting in March 2023 in Washington DC. Co-chaired by the United States and Canada - founding members of the FOC - the FCG helps to 1) increase dialogue across the donor landscape to harness opportunities for closer collaboration between development activities and policy interventions; 2) enhance knowledge sharing, learning and strategic coordination to inform foreign engagement and assistance priorities related to Internet freedom and digital democracy issues; 3) expand and diversify stakeholder engagement, particularly among the global majority, on Internet freedom and digital democracy issues.

While we have the broad architecture for the session, specific speakers for the session will be determined in a collaborative and consultative fashion with FOC FCG members and civil society, private sector and academic partners from the FOC Advisory Network. Consultations on the Donor Principles, and their potential launch at IGF, will take place during two separate sessions at RightsCon in June 2023.

The session has four main goals:

- 1) officially launch the Donor Principles for the Digital Age (see more below);
- 2) gather diverse multistakeholder input - particularly from global majority countries - on the types of commitments different stakeholders could make to put these principles into action;
- 3) discuss how existing multistakeholder fora, including national IGFs, could be leveraged to generate support for and implementation of the Donor Principles;
- 4) socialize and gain support for the Principles from an expanded set of government, civil society, private sector and academic stakeholders

A draft Donor Principles action plan will be the main concrete output of this session. A convening of the FOC Funding Coordination Group (FCG) will also take place on the sidelines of the IGF.