

Next steps for a resilient Christchurch Call

Supporting the Christchurch Call Community by building a resilient Secretariat and contributing the Call model to related digital challenges in the context of terrorist and violent extremist content.

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Summary

Following Leaders' direction at the fourth Leaders' Summit in 2022, this paper identifies possible next steps for a resilient Christchurch Call.

This paper explores how the Christchurch Call Community can sustain and build progress towards its Commitments to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content (TVEC) online with the support of a more independent, resilient Secretariat, while contributing the Call model to address digital issues as they relate to the elimination of TVEC online. Such issues potentially include those identified at the fourth Leaders' Summit: information integrity and disinformation, new and emerging technologies such as generative artificial intelligence (AI), and young people and radicalisation.¹

Building greater resilience into the Christchurch Call Secretariat through establishing a structure with greater independence would grow the Secretariat's capacity to support the Christchurch Call Community. The Secretariat is currently resourced by and embedded within the French and Aotearoa New Zealand Governments. Maintaining the current leadership by the Call co-Founders, while creating an independent legal identity for the Secretariat, could provide resilience through the ability to access input from a more diverse range of contributors, secure long-term funding, and deliver the scope to operate with greater pace, scale, and agility than at present.

The Call's co-Founders seek Leaders' support to build a more resilient and independent structure for the Secretariat. The Secretariat would be directed to work with the Call Community to implement this approach under the leadership and decision-making of the New Zealand and French Government Leaders, to put the Call on a sustainable path for the future.

This could expand the Secretariat's capacity to meaningfully advance work as directed by Leaders at the fourth Summit, to apply the Call's curated multistakeholder model to a small number of issues related to the elimination of TVEC online. Subject to Leaders' direction, the Secretariat and Community, working with existing related initiatives and coalitions, could establish work programmes for some of these issues, including, as required, developing new stakeholder groupings, commitments, and projects that reflect the specific challenges these issues present.

Work on related issues and initiatives recognises the need to adapt to the growing complexities and changes in the Call's environment, builds on the work of the Call to date, and enables fulfillment of Call Commitments, including to "[d]evelop and support a range of practical, non-duplicative initiatives to ensure that this pledge is delivered."²

The Secretariat has received positive indications of external philanthropic interest in supporting the Call on these proposed next steps.

¹ Co-Chair Statement, Fourth Christchurch Call Leaders' Summit, New York, 20 September 2022.

² Call Commitment 24.

Proposal for a resilient Christchurch Call Secretariat

(I) Background

The Christchurch Call operates among a diffuse grouping of digital governance initiatives, and in an environment where digital challenges do not easily fit into existing governance mechanisms. The Call has become a significant driver of change, helping to build new trust and safety approaches and collaborations that are effective against the proliferation of TVEC online.

At the fourth Christchurch Call Leader's Summit in September 2022, Leaders agreed the Call must remain focused on the scope of its Commitments, building on success to date, and sustaining this work into the future.

The Call operates in a rapidly changing, complex environment, where terrorist and violent extremist ideologies are intermingled with and enabled by other related issues, like the challenge of promoting information integrity and addressing the spread of disinformation, and technological developments, like increasingly sophisticated generative artificial intelligence tools. This environment has made it steadily more challenging for the Secretariat, within the limitations of its current structure and resources, to support the Call Community to address the Call Commitments.

To address the more difficult issues in the Call's Commitments and work programme it is essential that Leaders and the Community have confidence that the support structure for the Community's delivery of the Call Commitments is resilient to change and adequately resourced and sustained over time.

(II) The current Secretariat structure

At present, the work of the Christchurch Call is jointly led by the Governments of France and Aotearoa New Zealand, working with the technology sector, governments, and civil society leaders. This community of members is supported by a Secretariat function staffed by officials from the New Zealand and French governments.

Continued Secretariat support to facilitate progress on the Call currently relies on sustained political and financial support from these governments. The current structure limits the ease with which the Secretariat can access external funding (due to public finance requirements) and it is difficult to employ staff globally or from outside of the New Zealand and French governments, or to take on secondments or other inputs. This has implications for the scale and pace of the work the Secretariat can undertake itself or that it can support the Call Community to deliver.

(III) Requirements for a new Secretariat structure

The Call Community ideally needs an institutional support centre that is resilient to change, can be agile in the face of rapid developments and uptake of new technologies, serves as a model in global technology governance for smart multistakeholder solutions and ideas, and convenes the right people to deliver in a way that sustains and builds on the success of the Call, in accordance with Leaders' direction last year.³

Call co-Founders, France and New Zealand, seek Leaders' support at their 2023 Summit to develop options to place the Secretariat on a resilient, sustainable footing, as outlined in this paper.

With Leaders' support and direction, the co-Founders propose to take subsequent decisions on options to restructure and redesign the Secretariat, and then direct the Secretariat to implement these

³ Co-Chair Statement, Fourth Christchurch Call Leaders' Summit.

decisions, ahead of the next Leaders' Summit. The Secretariat proposes to develop advice with options, working with the Call Community, for the co-Founders as they take these decisions.

Advice to the Call co-Founders on re-designing the institutional structure of the Secretariat will be guided by the overarching aim of delivering a resilient, sustainable Secretariat that can continue to, and improve, support to the Community and Call Leaders. Advice and decisions on a restructured and redesigned Secretariat will be guided by a set of critical criteria, including that the solution must:

- Improve delivery against Call goals by enabling greater pace, scale, and agility than at present.
- Be acceptable to the Call Community, including by enabling stakeholders to be represented in its design, and operation.
- Enable long-term funding from diverse sources; governmental and otherwise.
- Deliver ongoing New Zealand and French Government leadership as co-Founders of the Call, with the ability for strengthened leadership from other members across the Call Community.
- Maintain and strengthen interoperability with related initiatives.
- Remain sustainable in the long term, including being adaptable to changes in technology, the issues presented by TVEC, and political and commercial environments.

(IV) Possible Secretariat Structure

As an initial proposal, the Secretariat could be established, either wholly or partly, as a permanent, independent public-good legal entity (either a trust or non-profit organisation), based in New Zealand, France, or another suitable jurisdiction. A structure such as this, with careful design, could prove sufficiently flexible to meet the criteria outlined above.

The entity would seek funding for its operations and any agreed projects from a wide range of sources, including from Call Supporters and philanthropic funding. It would employ staff (or accommodate contributions of staff from Call supporters) globally.

A Board of Trustees or Directors would be established to oversee the Secretariat's corporate and financial functions. The entity's founding document would set the remit of the Board, and appointments of Board members (including maintaining the leadership of New Zealand and France as the two Call co-Founders).

The Board would not have authority over the Call work programme. Rather the work programme would continue to be set by Leaders. The Board would ensure that the Secretariat is performing well and that its operations are aligned with the policy directions Leaders determine at their annual Leaders' Summit.

The Christchurch Call itself, as a curated multi-stakeholder community, currently has no corporate or legal structure and exists through the voluntary efforts, trust, and ongoing commitment of its members. The proposal for a new legal entity to provide the Call's Secretariat function is not intended to fundamentally change the Secretariat's current functions or the structure of the Call Community or its operating model. It is intended to significantly enhance the ability of the Secretariat to support and deliver on the Community's intent. The restructured Secretariat would continue to support Call Leaders and the Call Community as it has to date, while also being capable of supporting any directions from Leaders to contribute the Call model to address digital challenges related to the Call's mission to eliminate TVEC online.

Contributing the Christchurch Call model to the governance of related digital challenges in the context of TVEC

(I) Background

At the fourth Summit in 2022, Leaders discussed next steps for the Call and requests from some stakeholders to deploy the Call’s unique model in support of other digital issues as they relate to TVEC (‘related issues’). Leaders “agreed the Call should remain focused on the scope of its Commitments building on our success and sustaining this work into the future.”⁴ Leaders additionally agreed New Zealand, France, and other Call community members with an interest would consider some of these related issues, as they sought to understand:

- How we might apply what we have learned working on the Christchurch Call to related issues in the context of TVEC, such as disinformation and information integrity, harassment, abuse and hatred online, and issues affecting youth;
- How we can support and engage on related initiatives addressing these issues; and,
- Where multistakeholder interest lies in new work programmes separate to the Call.⁵

In recognising the growth in new technologies, Leaders also directed the Community to launch a new stream of work to understand the adoption of new technologies in a rights-affirming and safety-conscious way to secure against TVEC. This timely workstream includes addressing the risks and opportunities of generative AI in proliferating and eliminating TVEC. This is one of the first instances of a multistakeholder community comprehensively analysing and finding solutions for generative AI challenges, which will be catalysed with the expansion of the Christchurch Call supporter base to include more generative AI companies.

These related issues have clear overlaps with the mission of the Call to eliminate TVEC online. The ability to address these issues in the context of TVEC will contribute to the fulfillment of Call Commitments to counter the drivers of TVEC by strengthening the resilience and inclusiveness of our societies,⁶ develop effective interventions,⁷ respect and protect human rights,⁸ and work across a range of initiatives to ensure the delivery of the Call Commitments.⁹

The related issues are all significant digital and human rights challenges. The Call model could be meaningfully applied to drive smart solutions across these issues, either within the Call Secretariat structure or through effective partnerships.

Working on these issues as they relate to the elimination of TVEC online will advance the Call’s core work. It may also demonstrate that broader issues related to information integrity or generative AI can be best addressed through the multistakeholder approach and rights-affirming values demonstrated by the Call model.

⁴ Co-Chair Statement, Fourth Christchurch Call Leaders’ Summit.

⁵ Co-Chair Statement, Fourth Christchurch Call Leaders’ Summit.

⁶ Christchurch Call Commitment One.

⁷ Christchurch Call Commitment 14.

⁸ Christchurch Call Commitment 21.

⁹ Christchurch Call Commitment 24.

(II) Developing new work programmes

These related issues present specific challenges, and further work is needed to explore whether they require their own sets of commitments, projects, and stakeholder groupings to address the issues effectively while protecting human rights and a free, open, secure internet as a force for good. A strengthened Secretariat could work with the Call Community and support Leaders to take forward work to address these new digital, human rights challenges in relation to TVEC.

(III) Greater collaboration

The Call operates within a complex web of existing international initiatives and institutions. Existing global or institutional structures are generally poorly suited to emerging digital challenges, lacking the leadership buy-in, expertise, legitimacy, flexibility, or critical mass to effect change globally. At present, there is no natural 'home' for many technology governance issues. Multiple international institutions are working in this space without offering models that effectively promote the benefits of multistakeholder collaboration between government, industry, and civil society.

The Call model can play an important role in supporting Leaders to make meaningful progress on the most important digital challenges we collectively face. A strengthened Secretariat would also be better able to facilitate collaboration between the Call and other important initiatives working on issues related to TVEC through support and partnership.¹⁰

Drawing on "a range of practical, non-duplicative initiatives" in a coordinated and structured manner will better "ensure that [the Call] pledge is delivered."¹¹

(IV) Leveraging cross cutting capabilities

The Secretariat could continue to support the delivery of specific, funded technical outputs that can be applied across multiple digital challenges in the context of TVEC to deliver practical, credible solutions that inform changes in policy and practice. This includes, for example, leveraging the Christchurch Call Initiative on Algorithmic Outcomes to provide tools for enabling secure, privacy protected research on sensitive data, based on:

- a networked infrastructure with high levels of security;
- an agreed ethics framework that supports researcher access to enable better understanding of human/AI interactions, and research for public good;
- funded research partnerships with specialist experts, data custodians, and interested communities of practice;
- Multistakeholder engagement and governance.

Next steps

Leaders are invited to discuss the proposals in this paper for a resilient Call Secretariat, designed to support the Community's delivery of Call commitments in a rapidly changing environment.

The Call's co-Founders seek Leaders' support to progress work to implement a resilient, independent structure for the Secretariat over 2023-2024. The Secretariat will work with the Call Community to

¹⁰ As in the Co-Chair Statement for the Fourth Christchurch Call Leaders' Summit, such initiatives include Tech for Democracy, the Summit for Democracy, the Freedom Online Coalition, the Declaration for the Future of the Internet, the Aqaba Process, the Global Partnership for Action on Gender Based Online Harassment and Abuse, the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, and the International Call to Stand up for Children's Rights Online.

¹¹ Call Commitment 24.

implement this approach under the leadership and decision-making of the New Zealand and French Governments.

Call Leaders are invited to discuss the role of the Call model in addressing digital issues related to the Call's mission to eliminate TVEC and, should they wish to pursue this, to identify candidate issues and direct the Secretariat and Community to work on next steps to apply the Call model to these.

Annex A: An example model for a resilient Call Secretariat and work on addressing related digital issues in the context of TVEC

Governance	Christchurch Call to Eliminate TVEC - Leaders (providing Call direction)				
	Christchurch Call to Eliminate TVEC - Board (overseeing Secretariat functions)				
Organisational Structure	Expanded Christchurch Call Secretariat (reporting to Call Leaders and Board) + Multistakeholder Community				
TVEC issues	<i>"Traditional" Call issues, e.g., Content Mod. & Crisis Response</i>	<i>Information integrity & TVEC</i>	<i>AI & TVEC</i>	<i>Youth radicalisation</i>	<i>Offline intersections with TVEC</i>
Commitment frameworks	The 25 Call Commitments	TBC	TBC, possibly related to US AI Voluntary Commitments	TBC	TBC
Examples of potential delivery partners and collaborators	The existing Call Community	Declaration on Information Integrity FOC Task Force on Trustworthy Information Online	Frontier Model Forum	Call Youth Reference Group Children Online Protection Lab	TBC
Shared technical solutions	Christchurch Call Initiative on Algorithmic Outcomes				
Measuring impact	Shared system for evaluation and reporting of progress				

