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**UNCLASSIFIED****DEFENDING DEMOCRACY - G7 RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISM****LATEST DEVELOPMENTS**

- *Canada and France co-hosted the second G7 RRM meeting of Focal Points from March 18-19, 2019 in Paris. This meeting noted for all members that the structures are all in place (RRM Coordination Unit in Canada, Focal Points identified), and now the priority is to use the mechanism in order to demonstrate its value added.*
- *It was noted by various Focal Points that the need for this mechanism is as important today (if not more important) than last year. It was also clear that the level of support across the RRM members varies significantly. Not all members have the same level of national support (resource and/or direction to engage across national structures with the RRM Focal Point). Given the breadth of mandate of the RRM, national support structures are required for each Focal Point to make the mechanism effective.*
- *A progress report to Ministers was discussed and is being drafted, to be submitted for the G7 Ministerial on April 5-6.*

**CANADIAN POSITION**

- Canada remains deeply committed to reinforcing democracy and defending democratic values, institutions, and processes against malicious state actors.
- The RRM, and supporting the RRM Coordination Unit, has enabled Canada to continue to play a leadership role in building G7 cooperation and resilience in this space.
- We ask for all G7 members to reinforce its commitment to the RRM and to the importance of sharing information across our networks. This will enable each of us to integrate relevant open-source information and lessons learned into our national structures tasked with protecting and reinforcing our democracies.
- While there is an understandable focus on the issue of disinformation and its impact on democratic institutions and processes, we remind everyone that this mechanism is mandated to look at a broad spectrum of threats and we should seek out ways to ensure we leverage the mechanism to support our decision making process across various threat vectors.

**BACKGROUND**

The RRM addresses a broad spectrum of threats. In Toronto, illustrative threats were identified under three headings: 1) Institutions and Processes; 2) Disinformation and Media; and 3) Fundamental Freedoms and Human Rights. It was also noted in Toronto that threats to democracy disproportionately impact women and vulnerable groups. In Charlevoix, the RRM was announced, and Canada committed to support the work of the RRM on an ongoing basis by leading the RRM Coordination Unit.

The RRM is now fully operational, with the first 9 months dedicated to establishing the mechanism, which included: identifying Focal Points and establishing the RRM network; standing up the Coordination Unit; socializing the RRM concept within national government structures (national announcements, briefings to national/international structures on the RRM, etc.); negotiating the foundational documents; and launching initial reporting from the RRM Coordination Unit. The first meeting of the RRM Focal Points was November 5-6, 2018, with the second on March 18-19, 2019.

Focal points have been identified by all members, although the level of engagement across the network varies significantly.

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- **Canada, US, UK, France** and the **EU** have been most engaged. While information sharing across the network has been limited to date, it is clear that within these members, there is a capacity that can be leveraged and an increasing awareness across the national/institutional structures about the work and potential value of the RRM.
- **Germany** continues to have a temporary Focal Point (currently within the Foreign Office team responsible for G7 and bilateral relations with Canada). National level discussions continue as to who will lead on issues related to hybrid state activity, of which threats to democracy is reflected. The German Focal Point anticipates a decision in the coming weeks, and that the file will likely be transferred to the Ministry of Interior, but that is not confirmed. The result is that to date, there is no engagement by Germany beyond participating in the two Focal Point meetings.

Next steps for the RRM are to reinforce the need for information sharing across the network. To contribute to this effort, the RRM Coordination Unit is working to consolidate information related to threats to democracy (open source reports, key academic and media reports, etc) and share this across the RRM via the *RRM Wire*. The Canadian Focal Point team is working to produce open-source data analysis and reports into specific aspects of foreign interference, which includes collaboration with a range of partners in academia, on topics ranging from the gender dimensions of computational propaganda and foreign interference operations to effective methodologies for addressing foreign interference in digital contexts. The RRM Canada team is also working in close partnership with departments from across the government of Canada and is integrated into national structures to share information gathered via the RRM into protecting our federal election. This includes consolidating reports on tactics used in the Ukrainian elections, and monthly trends reports on social media in Canada which assist in charting trends, strategies and tactics in support of the RRM and Canadian structures to address disinformation within the federal election.

**TALKING POINTS**

- The issue of threats to democracy not only resonated amongst G7 Leaders in 2018, but should be considered as important if not more important this year. We will continue to work collaboratively with our G7 partners to make the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) a success.
- To consolidate the commitment from last year of sharing open-source information across the G7 in order for each of us to learn about emerging trends and tactics in relation to threats against our democracies, we need to reinforce our national commitments to engage with the RRM.
- Through the national Focal Points, they should be positioned to gather information from across your national structures on issues related to threats to democracy, while also sharing the information gathered via the RRM throughout your governments and institutions in order to increase the likelihood of extracting and applying relevant information to protect your democracies.
- Recognizing the significant threat and importance of addressing disinformation from foreign actors within our democracies, the RRM has begun to demonstrate its ability to focus our efforts on understanding and sharing information on this issue. Moving forward, we should ensure we leverage and test this mechanism to focus on broader issues related to threats to democracy, as we committed to in Toronto in 2018.

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