

For Public Release

UNCLASSIFIED

MEMORANDUM FOR MINISTER OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

via: Ian McCowan

c.c.: **SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES AND
POLICIES RELATED TO INTERFERENCE AND DEMOCRACY**

(Information Only)

SUMMARY

- As requested by your office, this note and the attached table (**Annex A**) describe the current state of a variety social media companies' policies, which are related to foreign interference in elections.
- The table is divided into three sections: "Policies implemented", "Policies announced" and "Policy ideas". Going forward, the last section is open for more ideas to be included. For each section, the table provides general descriptions of policies, notes the companies that have announced them, and lists the jurisdictions in which these policies have taken effect.
- Many of these proposals have been announced or implemented in advance of the United States 2018 midterm elections, to be held on November 6, 2018.
- A subsequent note is being prepared to support your engagement with social media companies in August 2018.

Allen Sutherland

Attachment

ANNEX A

Policy Initiative	Description	Companies	Countries
Policies Implemented			
Suite of election protection tools	<p>Certain companies have developed tools that election stakeholders could use to protect themselves from interference.</p> <p>These tools range in design and purpose. Some are designed with electoral administrators in mind, while others would now be useful political actors, such as advertisers, campaigners, and candidates.</p>	<p>Facebook launched the Election Integrity Project in Canada in October 2018, which focuses on the cybersecurity of political campaigns.</p> <p>Google offers a suite called "Protect Your Election", with an aim to support a wider array of stakeholders.</p> <p>Jigsaw, a Google affiliate, offers Project Shield, which protects more than just elections.</p> <p>Microsoft has announced its own Defending Democracy Program.</p>	<p>Facebook – Canada</p> <p>Google – Global</p> <p>Microsoft – United States</p>
Tagging questionable content with fact-checking labels	<p>Companies are using external and independent fact-checking organizations and provide disclaimers if a story uses or repeats false or misleading information.</p>	<p>Google uses this feature for Google News (similarly, YouTube announced they would introduce a feature providing Wikipedia articles beside conspiracy videos).</p> <p>Microsoft provides fact-checking tags within Bing search results.</p> <p>Facebook has experimented with fact-checking tags in the past.</p>	Global

For Public Release

[APG]

ANNEX A

Policy Initiative	Description	Companies	Countries
Alerting users about interactions with suspected accounts	Companies that discovered accounts sharing misinformation, or associated with known foreign misinformation actors, are able to share alerts with users who have had interactions with these accounts. This action is usually accompanied with deleting the suspected accounts.	Twitter sent users a notice in February 2018. Tumblr sent users a notice in March 2018.	Global
View all of an advertisers' ads	Allow users to view all of the ads that an advertiser is currently running. Show users the textual and visual content of an ad (as implemented, Facebook does not show the user and other context of the advertisement, such as reach, price paid, etc.).	Facebook initially introduced this concept in Canada, but it was expanded globally in Spring 2018.	Facebook – globally
Database of political ads	Providing users with a public, searchable database of all political and issue advertising purchased on the platform, along with information about the page which posts the ad, the purchaser, the cost, the location, the demographics reached and the time it ran.	Facebook launched such a database on May 24, 2018, cataloging ads from the beginning of May, and will keep a record of ads for seven years. When appearing before PROC in Spring 2018, a Facebook official noted that it was not known when the program would be expanded to Canada.	United States

[APG]

For Public Release

ANNEX A

Policy Initiative	Description	Companies	Countries
Verifying advertisers buying political advertisements	Requiring advertisers who wish to purchase political or issue advertising to provide some form of government-issued identification. This is related to requiring a domestic mailing address. Companies could engage with electoral administrators to ensure that all entities which purchase political advertising are captured.	<p>Facebook requires advertisers, and the administrators of pages to confirm their identity with the company before they run political advertising.</p> <p>Facebook, Google and Twitter all require registration with some form of government-issued ID for political advertisers.</p> <p>Twitter will rely on the expertise of the Federal Electoral Commission to help with this initiative.</p>	United States
Ensuring domestic mailing address	Part of a verification address, which requires advertisers to provide a domestic mailing address, which the company then sends a unique verification code to. The code is required for complete registration.	Facebook introduced this step as part of its authorization program.	United States
Policies Announced			
Banning foreign purchases of political ads	Removing the ability of foreign actors to purchase domestic political and issue advertising. This initiative can be as simple as banning the purchase of political ads in foreign currency, but would also require extra diligence to catch foreign advertisers using domestic money.	<p>Has been announced by Facebook and Google.</p> <p>Twitter has previously banned advertisements from two news organizations connected to the Russian Government.</p>	United States

[APG]

ANNEX A

Policy Initiative	Description	Companies	Countries
Disclosure on political and issue advertisements	Implementing an easily understandable disclosure banner on all political and issue advertising that marks the ad as such, and notes who paid for the advertisement. Banners should make it immediately clear to users that the content is a political advertisement.	<p>Facebook has required a "paid for" disclaimer since May 24, 2018, in the US.</p> <p>Google has announced they will require disclaimers, but it has not been implemented yet.</p> <p>Twitter has announced they will require disclaimers, and shown some examples, but it has not yet been implemented.</p>	Facebook – United States, likely will be expanded globally.
Providing data for independent researchers	Digital media companies have committed to providing independent researchers access to data to perform studies on the effects of social media on communities and democracy. Thus far, little news has emerged about these business-academic-philanthropic partnerships.	In April 2018, Facebook committed to allowing researchers access to its data, but under strict supervision to protect users' data.	United States
Redefining <i>political</i> and <i>issue</i> advertising	Providing clear, understandable definitions of what advertising content counts as "political" or "issue" advertising, and when during an election cycle these definitions would come into effect.	The definitions of "political" and "issue" advertising will vary from company to company. It is also unclear whether these companies will publish their definitions.	Global
Advertising transparency reports	<p>Companies would publish reports explaining the details of political advertising on their platform.</p> <p>Similarly, companies could establish new centres dedicated to studying political advertisements on their platforms and publishing their research.</p>	<p>Google has announced they will publish an advertising transparency report in Summer 2018.</p> <p>Twitter has committed to launching an Ads Transparency Center in the summer.</p>	Unknown if these will be global or US-specific measures

[APG]

ANNEX A

Policy Initiative	Description	Companies	Countries
Policy Ideas (early ideas by PCO-DI)			
Changing the process of updating products	Companies continue to tweak their products and what users find on their platforms. These tweaks can have adverse effects if stakeholders are not consulted, and the companies act unilaterally. These mal-informed changes can be mitigated by greater engagement with key stakeholders.	Facebook continually updates its News Feed product, determining what users interact with. Google continually updates its search engines, changing what sorts of results are placed at the top and seen by users.	
Special verification for campaign actors	Companies could provide special verification markers for candidates and parties currently involved in an election campaign, in an attempt to cut down on the distribution of disinformation regarding them.		

For Public Release

[APG]