

Meeting agenda

1. *Welcome and introduction, purpose of the framework.*
2. *Open discussion on the draft PNIF Internet fragmentation framework*
3. *Conclusion and next steps*

Introduction - what we learned from the PNIF discussions and webinars

- There are a lot of different views on fragmentation.
- There are two 'buckets of manifestations' people refer to:
 - user experience, control over information flows, that is resulting in a completely different user experience depending from where one is accessing or not able to access.
 - Technical layer fragmentation. There are a lot of potential threats to the technical layer or the internet, which are not necessarily manifesting at present.
- Some identify an in-between bucket of measures that may or may not lead to fragmentation of the user experience or technical layer.
- There's also a fragmentation of internet governance.

A [visualisation of the draft framework](#) was shared.

Guiding questions for the call

Is this framework comprehensive? Useful? What could it achieve?

What should be the main goals of this framework ?

Does this build on existing work?

Discussion on the draft framework for discussing internet fragmentation

Ms Sheetal Kumar explained that the intention is to present a draft framework for working on addressing internet fragmentation at the PNIF session during the IGF meeting. The framework should allow to identify what about fragmentation (or what forms) is bad and should be avoided, and to work - in the context of a follow-up PNIF next year - on providing recommendations and solutions to specific stakeholder groups and policymakers.

Mr Bill Drake commented that establishing a framework for continuing the dialogue and bringing more people in, and outlining a set of questions to the international community for addressing this complex and multifaceted problem is a logical approach. He referred to the 2016 WEF paper he co-authored, which approached the issue in a deductive way, first collecting examples of what people say is fragmentation to then creating different categories. In a way schuh approach was easier to involve more people.

Mr Wim Degezelle noted that one of the purposes of the PNIF is to keep the discussion going and involve more voices. Many discussions on internet fragmentation - including the PNIF discussions so far and the survey - focus on definitions and concepts without working towards solutions. By

establishing a conceptual framework rather than a strict definition the PNIF wants to create a place for different views on what fragmentation is, and allow the work on solutions to advance. He further flagged that it is important to the draft framework as a step in the PNIF's 2-year work plan.

Mr Wolfgang Kleinwächter stressed the need to discuss fragmentation within the context of interoperability. The transport layer and application layer are surely interlinked, but thanks to the 'one world, one internet' which today is still the reality for the transport layer, we are able to interconnect. On the applications layer business and governance issues come in (which may reduce interoperability - e.g. walled gardens / national jurisdictions). One basic recommendation that should go out from the IGF is 'Don't touch the technical layer. It is a neutral resource.' On the application layer the recommendation should be 'enhanced cooperation amongst law makers' while for businesses 'work in greater interoperability'.

Mr Sivasubramanian Muthusamy highlighted that there is a long list of issues that have to be discussed, but that one of the key questions is 'who should talk to who'. Discussions should take place at a high level, e.g. governments should talk to governments that cause fragmentation, and the same should happen on the business side.

Mr Chris Buckridge reminded that the upcoming IGF is particularly important as its outputs can feed into the global digital compact process. The framework is a useful starting point for discussing fragmentation, however the 'the in between' as conceptualised so far, isn't particularly useful. While fragmentation of the technical layer is the key issue from an interoperability point of view, the PNIF discussions have made clear that also end user issues need to be looked at. It is crucial, however, to keep focus and avoid duplicating discussions that are already going on elsewhere, for example on access and human rights. The PNIF will need to be distinctive about what it is talking about. With regard to the 3rd dimension - fragmentation of governance and governance discussions - there's a risk of losing the current cohesion and overview of where to address national versus global problems. The three elements of the framework intersect in a complex way - this is what the 'in-between' should express - but this relation is not a 4th kind of fragmentation.

Asked how to conceptualise 'technical layer fragmentation' *Mr Wolfgang Kleinwächter* suggested 'interference with the technical core of the Internet' and *Mr Vittorio Bertola* identified two types of fragmentation at the transport layer: countries having their own national internet and big tech companies routing traffic via their private infrastructure.

Mr Raul Echeberria expressed concern that discussions will lose focus if issues such as affordability are considered as well. The focus should be on avoiding that policy makers and businesses take measures that could lead to fragmentation. The PNIF should clearly define what it is talking about. Stressing that fragmentation at the technical layer is not happening at the moment may send out a wrong message.

Mr Marek Blachut noted that fragmentation of the technical layer is defined in opposition to fragmentation of the user experience. It is fragmentation of what makes the internet work, of the infrastructure that complements and enables the user experience. It may not be necessary to be too granular or specific on what kind of infrastructure this - it could also be enabling infrastructure, which includes a notion of physical infrastructure.

Ms Sheetal Kumar noted that it might be difficult to move forward towards recommendations without being more specific. She also suggested using challenges 'to interoperability' instead of referring to the 'transport layer'.

Mr Sivasubramanian Muthusamy wondered if the way in which parts of the numbering and DNS is structured should also be considered a factor enabling fragmentation. *Ms Sheetal Kumar* reacted that it is important to differentiate between fragmentation and distributed networking or decentralised organisation.

Mr Wim Degezelle reminded that at the webinar some suggested to be more focused and limit technical fragmentation to 'what irreversibly (risks to) damage(s) the interoperability of the internet', and argued that some 'technical' measures may impact the user experience without threatening the global interoperability of the internet infrastructure.

Mr Bill Drake raised concern that a binary approach - technical versus user experience fragmentation - and including commercial and governmental issues in the latter, may blur the discussion about what is in that big basket. He wondered if it wouldn't be better to treat commercial and government practices as distinct.

He further added that access to infrastructure should not be included - the term fragmentation should not be used to express political concerns about the shape of the internet. That 2.5 billion people don't have access is not a fragmentation of the internet, it is a lack of access to the internet. Similarly, governmental fragmentation should be limited to behaviour that limits interoperability, behaviour that limits the ability of willing partners to exchange packets. Putting all policy in the same basket may blur the discussion. It is not because policies are different that they constitute fragmentation.

Mr Chris Buckridge added that internet governance issues need to be addressed in a coordinated way to avoid that different venues (including multilateral organisations) set norms that later prove incompatible. He further stressed that losing the multistakeholder governance structures that underbuild the technical running of the internet risks the global interoperability.

Mr Jorge Cancio said that efforts in the last 20 years allowed to establish global internet governance institutions (ICANN, IGF, High Level Panel, Road Map for Digital Cooperation, etc.) where it is possible to discuss internet governance issues in an open and inclusive way. The support from governments for these venues is a support for having an open and interoperable internet. Tendencies to create governance structures that align with different governance styles (bifurcation), risk to replace the open and inclusive fora by regional or ideology based fora which may put in question the interoperability.

Mr Wim Degezelle suggested conceptualising governance as a separate dimension in the framework, next to but interrelated with, user experience and technical fragmentation instead of an overarching or horizontal issue.

Ms Sheetal Kumar asked where to draw the line between 'fragmentation' and 'having no access'. *Mr Marek Blachut* answered that having no access (e.g. due to blocking) is not necessarily fragmentation. However, when this lack of access leads to the creation of alternatives that are not able to communicate to the rest of the internet (as such creates separate ecosystems), one can conclude that blocking resulted in fragmentation.

Mr Wim Degezelle reiterated that during the webinar the full interoperability of the internet was pointed out as an ideal or a reference against which one could assess the impact of measures that may cause fragmentation, while and human rights and free flow of data were suggested as reference framework to assess the impact on fragmentation of the user experience.

Mr Chris Buckridge said that some practices of cutting of certain populations from the global internet can impact the global interoperability of the internet, while other similar practices are just bad or evil uses on running the network from a human rights perspective. The PNIF should aim at being solid in the distinction between both conversations. The personal experience that the internet is not an open garden for everyone is not the same as a fragmented internet.

Next Steps

A revised version of the draft framework that takes into account the input from this working meeting will be shared ahead of the IGF meeting. The PNIF session at IGF 2022 will be used to present and discuss the draft framework with the IGF community.
