

Summary of the discussion

Introduction

1. **The IGF Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation (PNIF)** was set up to address the question of Internet Fragmentation, to raise awareness of actions and measures that risk fragmenting the Internet, and to facilitate discussion on what could be done to avoid fragmentation. To support a holistic dialogue on fragmentation, the PNIF developed its [PNIF Framework for discussing fragmentation](#) that differentiates between fragmentation of the Internet *User experience*, fragmentation of Internet *Governance and coordination*, fragmentation of the Internet's *Technical Layer*, and technical, political and commercial developments that may have an impact on fragmentation. In its 2025 cycle, the PNIF continues supporting the multistakeholder dialogue and monitors progress on the GDC commitment to avoid and address fragmentation ([GDC, art. 29, c](#)), well aware of the ongoing WSIS+20 review. More on the PNIF, including past meeting summaries, is available on the [PNIF webpage](#).
2. At its [Main Session](#) in June and subsequent webinars the PNIF amongst other things focused on the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholder groups in Internet governance and concrete suggestions on how each group can contribute to maintaining an unfragmented, open and interoperable Internet. Following these discussions, the PNIF published a set of [Draft recommendations arising from the 2025 PNIF cycle](#). A review of these recommendations is the main purpose of the 16 PNIF October webinar.

Draft Recommendations

3. The draft recommendation have been developed based on the PNIF discussions and are intended to inform and support ongoing and future deliberations on the role of the multistakeholder model in preserving an open, free, and global Internet, within the context of the WSIS+20 review and beyond, and to contribute to the operationalisation of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) commitment to promote stakeholder cooperation in preventing, identifying, and addressing risks of Internet fragmentation.

4. The draft recommendations are shared on the PNIF and [published](#) on the PNIF webpage for community review and feedback before they will be included in the PNIF's 2025 report.

Feedback

5. To kickstart the discussion, the PNIF invited *Vint Cerf*, Chief Internet Evangelist at Google and Chair of the IGF Leadership panel and member of the Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board ([IMSB](#)), to share his feedback on the recommendations. He reminded that the Internet can become fragmented in many ways, each of which undermine its usefulness, for example, when technical attacks reduce its reliability and functionality, or when people lack access to the Internet due to insufficient infrastructure or unaffordable costs. At the application layer, there are many examples where, often for business reasons, applications are not interoperable. Age controls are increasingly being introduced. There also exist accessibility failures, e.g. for people with disabilities. Email is an example where there is no fragmentation (although there is blocking because of spam).

Supportive of all five recommendations, he highlighted that **Recommendation 2** is timely and appropriate because governments react to social problems they see on the Internet. The challenge is to help governments respond in ways that are effective, but not destroy the utility of the Internet. While we understand some of the reasons why interferences are happening, we need to gather in a multi-stakeholder way and suggest solutions that do not interfere with the utility of the Internet.

6. *William Drake* noted that the recommendations are all process-focussed recommendations, and that it might be harder to come up with targeted recommendations, for example with regard to digital sovereignty, which is an expression of the desire to control against globalized (data) flows and seems to appeal across political divides.

He noted that many declarations about Internet fragmentation lack concrete actions, resulting in ongoing discussions about fragmentation without addressing it. For example, also the WSIS+20 draft calls for addressing and rejecting fragmentation and for cooperation, but does not suggest any particular action. Therefore, he suggested the following language for the WSIS: 'We affirm the need to promote focused and sustained international dialogue among governments and stakeholders in the Internet Governance Forum and other appropriate international venues in order to help identify and mitigate the risks of Internet fragmentation.'

7. *Bruna Martins dos Santos* noted that the stronger call for sovereignty coming from some countries in the Global South stem from a sense that their rights and those of their populations, are being overlooked compared to regions where the private sector and big tech act more carefully and responsibly.

8. *Arja Nunn* suggested making the recommendations more specific and more clearly linked to Internet fragmentation by adding concrete examples and references to harms caused by fragmentation. This would also help broaden the discussion on Internet fragmentation and involve regional and national actors. The suggestion to collect and add examples, or refer to societal issues, was supported by several other participants.
9. *Omor Faruque* warned that Internet fragmentation today risks creating a generation of digitally disconnected citizens. He recommended considering the human impact of Internet fragmentation, especially on young people whose identity and learning are deeply digital, advocated for the inclusion of youth expertise in cross-boarder coordination efforts, and to embed digital empathy and literacy frameworks into Internet governance dialogues.

Acknowledgements

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Links

[PNIF webpage](#)
