

# Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation

## Proposed activities IGF 2023

### *Background and 2022 work*

The proposal for a Policy Network on Internet fragmentation was born out of a community initiative by a multistakeholder coalition of civil society, business and technical community organisations to raise awareness of the technical, policy, legal and regulatory measures and actions that pose a risk to the open, interconnected and interoperable Internet.

The MAG confirmed the PNIF as IGF 2022 intersessional activity. The PNIF proposal<sup>1</sup> envisaged a two-year work plan with focus in the initial year on establishing a systematic and comprehensive framework to define Internet fragmentation, its intended and unintended causes, and its potential effects, to then, in a second year aim to establish recommendations or codes of conduct for different stakeholder groups to address fragmentation.

A PNIF Multistakeholder Working Group of Experts (MWG) provided advice on substance, scope and implementation of the policy network to ensure that the subject focus is of relevance for the global community and the PN implementation is in accordance with the IGF principles of being bottom-up, multistakeholder, open and transparent, inclusive and non-commercial.

### *Constructing a framework for discussing fragmentation*

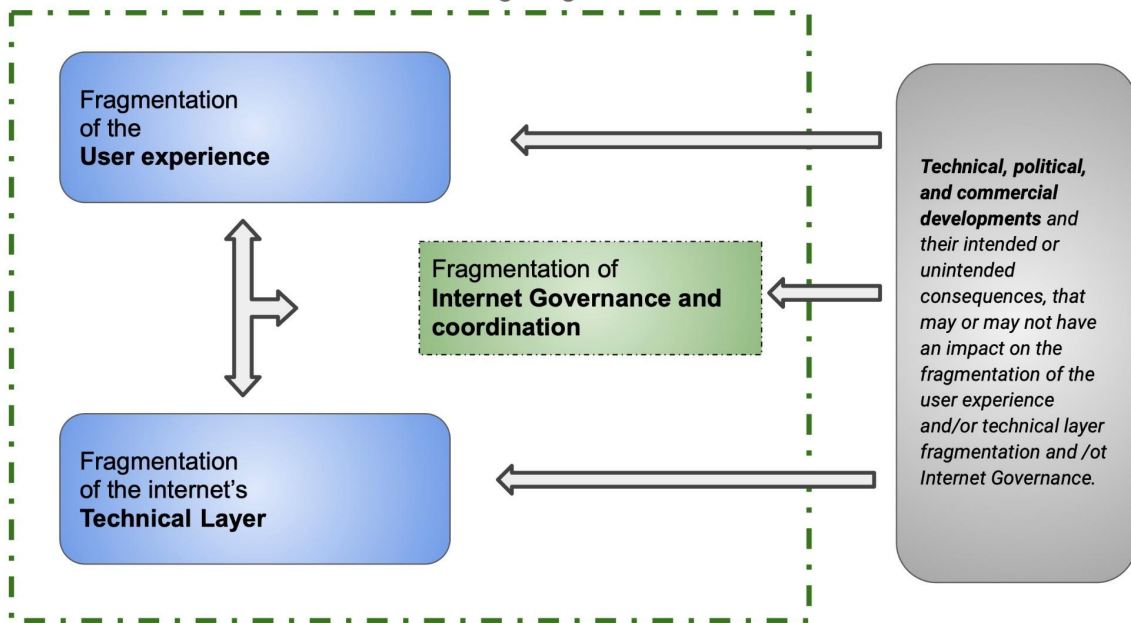
The PNIF discussions - including two 90 minute webinars (September and October) and a 90 minute session during the IGF in Addis Ababa - confirmed that there is a diversity of opinions and views about what Internet fragmentation is. At the same time, elements of a framework emerged from the conversations and allowed for the construction of the PNIF Framework for discussing fragmentation.

The framework conceptualises three key layers of fragmentation: ***fragmentation of the user experience***, ***fragmentation of the Internet's technical layer***, and ***fragmentation of Internet Governance & coordination***. Within these, there are **technical, political and commercial developments** that could potentially have an impact on fragmentation, and by examining each part separately the framework allows for the capture of potential relationships and overlaps of each.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot\\_download/251/20909](https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/251/20909)

## Draft PNIF framework for discussing fragmentation



### 2023 Work plan

The framework is conceptualised to serve as a general guiding and orienting tool to support dialogue about fragmentation and bring in more people and stakeholders. It intends to support a holistic and inclusive debate, and at the same time, enable focused discussion and work towards concrete solutions, policy approaches and guidelines.

The PNIF intends to use the framework in 2023 to structure its dialogue and work towards recommendations, best practice guidance and codes of conduct for different stakeholder groups to address fragmentation.

- The PNIF intends to approach this work in three parallel work streams, to further unpack, fine-tune and complete the framework's elements - fragmentation of the user experience, fragmentation of the Internet's technical layer, and fragmentation of Internet governance and coordination - based on the feedback received at and after the IGF meeting.
- The work streams will look at
  - Identification: which types of fragmentation and relevant actions pose the highest risks and should be avoided, as well as
  - Prevention: define practices, guidelines and principles to address or prevent fragmentation.
- There will be regular coordination between the workstreams to capture relationships and overlap between the three layers, and to explore if elements for overarching principles emerge or can be deduced.

### **The envisaged outputs for 2023**

- A refined and robust framework for discussing fragmentation, to provide increased clarity and common understanding about the diverse causes of fragmentation, their interrelation, impacts, and when fragmentation is most harmful and should be avoided.
- Recommended high-level overarching principles to avoid Internet fragmentation (building on the 2022 framework), to feed into discussions between policymakers and stakeholders, in particular but not exclusively in the framework of Global Digital Compact (GDC) process.
- Concrete guidance and solutions for stakeholders to address fragmentation, including alternative solutions for problematic policies and behaviour that might lead to harmful fragmentation.

### **Outreach Plan**

Responding to Wim's comment: just a few quick thoughts ... these are obvious but perhaps we could get more traction with targeted requests for inputs/intros/

- NRIs would be key to reach out to - for their participation but also for a specific request for referrals/introductions to key players/orgs
- ISOC
- UN Tech Envoy's Office
- For fragmentation of the Internet's technical layers - a 'formal' out reach to the IETF/IAB should be called out.
- WEF to tie into their commercial and policy interests