

## **Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation**

### **Names of at least two Facilitators (at least one of which is a MAG member):**

Bruna Martins dos Santos, MAG Member

Sheetal Kumar, Community co-facilitator

### **Model of intersessional work (BPF or PN):**

Policy Network

### **Short Description: topics covered, proposed objectives, focus of the BPF/PN and main action points (the description should provide sufficient detail to allow an assessment and selection).**

The request for the renewal of the PNIF for a third year rests on the need to continue to socialise the holistic framework for addressing internet fragmentation developed by the IGF Community in 2022 and 2023, to stakeholders - both part of as well as outside the IGF community. We intend to continue discussions on the three dimensions of the PNIF framework and how they are interlinked. As 2024 is a key year for Internet Governance, for this third year, important work is required to socialise and advance the recommendations related to the Fragmentation of Internet Governance processes elaborated in the 2023 report.

In that sense, the PNIF aims to tackle the following objects:

- Test, refine and socialise the 2023 report recommendations
- Identify means of implementing the 2023 report recommendations
- Connect the socialisation and implementation of the recommendations with the GDC and SDGs process and upcoming WSIS+20 Review. Here the PNIF could serve as a soundboard.
- Lastly, this policy network could have a relevant role in formulating a final set of recommendations regarding the importance of avoiding the duplication of Internet Governance Spaces, to be taken into account in the IGF mandate renewal

### **Work plan, outreach plan and multistakeholder engagement: This should mention the anticipated engagement from different parts of the multistakeholder community, and a work plan starting 1 April.**

- April-May: Open call/s with the IGF community to discuss the IGF 2023 recommendations, identify any required refinements
- June-July: 3 x multistakeholder discussion groups evaluate feedback, finalise recommendations, and develop a set of actions to support implementation (linking to the GDC, SDGs and WSIS+20 Review, among other relevant processes)
- August-October: Promote the implementation of recommendations as above
- November: Review of implementation and discussion of final output report with the main learnings in the recommendations socialisation process.
- December: IGF

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## Annexe 1 - Recommendation emerging from the PNIF session at IGF 2023

Throughout the PNIF activities recommendations for addressing internet fragmentation emerged.

### *Recommendations for addressing fragmentation of Internet governance and coordination.*

1. Do not introduce duplication within the internet governance landscape.
2. But, improve coordination between existing internet governance bodies.
3. To avoid siloed public policy discussions regarding Internet governance, all Internet governance bodies must be fully inclusive to stakeholders and enable meaningful multistakeholder participation.
4. Existing global Internet governance bodies should engage with national governments to promote inclusive policymaking.

### *Recommendations for addressing fragmentation of the Internet technical layer.*

1. Recognise that there are critical properties of the internet/public core that require multistakeholder protection.
2. Measure to monitor the extent and nature of different types of technical fragmentation as the internet evolves.
3. Critically assess and avoid technical proposals (in standards and technology development) which reduce interoperability or otherwise would take the Internet away from the properties and design principles which have led to its success.
4. Protect the multistakeholder approach.
5. Promote inclusive policymaking that integrates consideration of technical expertise/impact of policies on critical properties of the internet, while protecting innovation.

### *Recommendations for addressing fragmentation of the Internet user experience.*

Adherence to the following *principles* will contribute to addressing identified harms resulting from fragmentary behaviours:

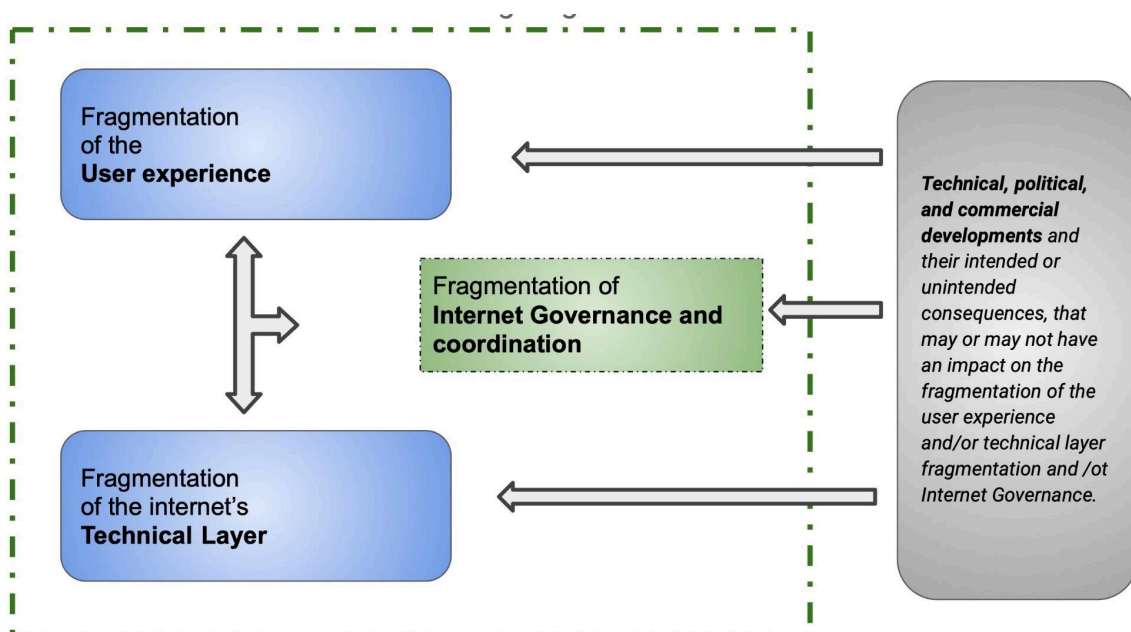
1. *Equality principle* - Every user should - as a starting point - be able to access what was intended to be made publicly available, in the same manner.
2. *Enhancement principle* - Measures to enhance the user experience by making it more relevant, meaningful, understandable, secure, or accessible, and that are requested by the users themselves (...) should not be considered as "bad" fragmentation that contravenes the first principle, notwithstanding the potential effects on uniformity.
3. *Impact assessment principle* - Any measure - whether by governmental, private sector, or technical actors - that may have a directly intended effect (...) to diminish or render ineffectual the first principle, must be evaluated prior to its introduction or implementation to ensure that such a measure is proportionate, addresses a legitimate harm, is respecting of human rights, and follows democratic procedures with multi-stakeholder involvement.

4. *Harmonisation principle* - Fragmentation that may be driven by diverse national regulatory or legislative approaches to protect the human rights or legitimate interests (...) can be avoided through cooperation and multilateral instruments (informed by multi-stakeholder consultation) that set globally-applicable baseline standards and protections of those rights and interests, (...).
5. *Free Choice principle* - No user of the Internet should be coerced or unduly incentivised to use a particular platform, technology, or service provider - especially in order to provide or access content, resources, applications or services on the Internet that would not have otherwise been made possible or available to them (...). Users should be able to choose the applications, instruments and service providers that they use and should not be subject to unfair conditions deriving from dominant market positions, lock-in and network effects.

The recommendations are not carved in stone but intended as valuable input for further stakeholder discussion. The report identified areas for further research, and the identification of best practices. Testing and socialisation of the recommendations and practices in an inclusive stakeholder setting can be important in the context of the GDC process and upcoming WSIS+20 Review. The PNIF could serve as such a soundboard.

The Report of the IGF 2023 Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation is available at [https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot\\_download/256/26667](https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/256/26667).

## Annexe 2 PNIF Framework for discussing Internet Fragmentation



### Annexe 3 References

- The IGF Leadership panel's [draft letter](#) 'the Internet We Want' calls upon stakeholders to commit to 'preserve an open, free, globally connected, interoperable, unfragmented and stable Internet'
- IGF 2024 Call for Thematic Inputs
- UN Secretary General's [Our Common Agenda](#), art 93, 'avoid internet fragmentation', & preparations for the Global Digital Compact and Summit of the Future.
- [IGF Kyoto messages](#),[IGF Addis Ababa messages](#)