IGF 2023
Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation
(PNIF)

PNIF 2023 Kick-off call
Summary, 26 April 2023

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Introduction: PNIF 2022 and PNIF Framework for discussing fragmentation

1. The PNIF is an IGF intersessional activity to further the discussion on and to raise awareness of the technical, policy, legal and regulatory measures and actions that pose a risk to the open, interconnected and interoperable Internet. Its objectives are to enhance understanding of what Internet fragmentation is, collect and analyse case studies, offer principles and recommendations to prevent fragmentation.

2. The PNIF activities in 2022 established a framework to discuss internet fragmentation that buckets different understandings of fragmentation in three interconnected categories: *Fragmentation of the user experience*, *Fragmentation of the Internet's technical layer*, and *Fragmentation of Internet governance and coordination*. The framework is described in the PNIF 2022 output report. Its overall goal is to serve as a reference tool for continuing the dialogue about fragmentation and bringing in more people and stakeholders, to support a holistic and inclusive debate, while creating a space for focussed discussion and to work towards concrete solutions.

PNIF 2023 Objectives and work plan

3. The PNIF in 2023 intends to further unpack the PNIF framework via three parallel work streams on *fragmentation of the user experience, fragmentation of the Internet's technical layer,* and *fragmentation of Internet governance and coordination.*

   The work streams will work in an open and bottom-up manner to take a deep dive into the identification and prevention of fragmentation:
   ● identification : Identify which types of fragmentation and related actions pose the highest risks and should be addressed or avoided;
   ● prevention : Define practices, guidelines, and principles to prevent or address fragmentation.

4. Comments and feedback
   ● Important to clarify the difference between fragmentation at the technical layer, of internet governance, and of coordination.
   ● There is a growing fragmentation of the dialogue on internet governance with the creation of new platforms and new forums where fragmentation is discussed. The PNIF (IGF) could serve as a space where these initiatives can meet.
   ● The PNIF should look into addressing current manifestations of fragmentation as well as preventing future potential fragmentation.

- The PNIF should not introduce new meanings to the term 'Internet governance' that go beyond the WGIG working definition included in the 2005 Tunis Agenda.[1] This does not limit the PNIF from addressing other relevant related issues, but it should remain clear what issues are within and go beyond the definition.
- It was pointed out that *sharing* principles, rules and decision-making procedures for managing the Internet is a key element included in the Internet governance definition - which was supported by the UN member states.

5. The the combined work of the three work streams will constitute the PNIF 2023 outputs, which are envisaged to include:
   - 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.

6. Next steps:
   - Three webinars (date tbc) will be organised to kick-off the discussion on each of the dimensions. The webinars are open to all and will be choreographed in a similar way as last year's 90 min PNIF webinars with short interventions by pre-identified discussants followed by extensive open discussion.

7. Comments and feedback:
   - Bringing those involved in different processes (OECD, UNESCO, GDC, …) together to reflect on how their work can contribute to cohesive internet governance would be a valuable achievement of the PNIF.
   - The work streams may not not become silos and the PNIF should foresee reflection moments on linkages and interplay between different types of fragmentation.
   - A more positive framing might be appropriate and make webinars more accessible, e.g. webinar on 'addressing' or 'preventing' fragmentation.

8. Outreach and engagement suggestions
   - The UK government is cooperating on a RightsCon session to create awareness about the PNIF. (details will be shared when available)
   - Youth communities should be invited, e.g. ISOC's Youth Standing Group or the Youth Coalition involved in the IGF.
   - A dedicated event featuring the PNIF work cloud support wider outreach.

9. AoB
   - GDC consultation: a PNIF submission that explains what the PNIF did in 2022 and the plans for 2023 will be shared on the mailing list and submitted by the deadline.

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[1] Internet governance is the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet. (Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, World Summit on the Information Society, 2005)

Meeting slides: https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/256/24936

Recording:
https://intgovforum.zoom.us/rec/share/Um90M6cK1_cy5VUm1v9kBG935waVtb593KTKzB9GcMN7M15VNfKFjYxSGiVmyX93.xrYUB7Upmd4L5DNd Passcode: %L46uSXH

PNIF 2022 output & Framework for discussing fragmentation:
Summary: https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/256/24195
Report: https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/256/24127

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