

IGF 2025 Global AI Governance: Reimagining IGF's Role & Impact

Session Report: Policy Network on AI (PNAI) Session for IGF 2025, 25.6.2025

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Overview

This session, convened by the Policy Network on AI (PNAI), explored the evolving role of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in global AI governance. It contributed directly to PNAI's 2025 work in developing recommendations and shaping an action plan on how IGF can maximize its impact as a central platform for inclusive and bottom-up multistakeholder discussions on AI governance. Positioned within the broader context of the WSIS+20 review, Global Digital Compact (GDC), and ongoing global AI governance dialogues and processes, the session aimed to gather insights that reflect regional realities, identify governance gaps, and co-create solutions rooted in equity, trust, and human rights. This session aimed to foster inclusive, multistakeholder dialogue, gather insights from both onsite and online participants, and generate actionable input that will inform PNAI's 2025 Policy. As IGF's dedicated Policy Network with focus on AI, PNAI plays a key role in connecting grassroots perspectives to global governance frameworks.

Policy Questions

- What unique value can the IGF and PNAI bring to global AI governance? Are there specific AI topics or areas that the IGF should focus on, especially in the context of ongoing global AI governance dialogues, such as the GDC and WSIS+20, beyond 2026?
- How can the IGF help ensure that global AI dialogues and decision-making on AI governance are truly participatory, inclusive, open and multistakeholder, ensuring equitable voice of marginalized groups and the Global South? Which indicators could be used to measure if AI dialogues are truly inclusive?
- How can the IGF help support capacity building of communities to engage effectively in AI governance discussions, for example, by building up an information repository on AI governance topics?
- How can PNAI facilitate a more inclusive multistakeholder approach to global AI governance and promote a multilateral, bottom-up approach (policymaking or standard setting processes)?

Summary of Issues Discussed

Inclusive, Multistakeholder Governance

Panelists affirmed that AI governance must be rooted in multistakeholder dialogue that centers historically excluded voices, particularly from the Global South. Shamira Ahmed (DEPHub) summarized PNAI's mission, to co-create community-informed policy recommendations grounded in equity, dignity, and sustainability. Panelists emphasized the importance of

maintaining open civic spaces for digital policy dialogue like the IGF, as access barriers like visas, funding, and language continue to limit Global South participation in multilateral AI governance venues.

AI & Inequality: Bridging Divides

Shuyan Wu (China Mobile Institute) and Mario Nobile (AgID Italy) spoke on the growing “intelligence divide,” echoing concerns around access, participation, and digital literacy. William Bird (Media Monitoring Africa) emphasized how unregulated markets reproduce online harms and deepen historical inequalities, including gender-based violence and digital colonialism. Participants also raised concern that AI development is reinforcing extractive dynamics, where data from underrepresented regions is used to train models hosted elsewhere, without meaningful benefit-sharing or accountability.

Human Rights, Data Sovereignty, and Accountability

Paloma Lara-Castro (Derechos Digitales) presented research showing how Latin American states’ use of AI in public services often lacks transparency, human rights assessments, or participatory frameworks, while outsourcing sensitive decision-making to unregulated third parties. Several speakers stressed the need for mandatory rights-based impact assessments, improved data governance, and equitable data ownership, particularly in African and Indigenous contexts. Speakers rejected the dichotomy between innovation and regulation, affirming the compatibility of both.

Trust & Regulatory Coherence

Ivana Bartoletti (Wipro) called for trust-building mechanisms that align AI governance with existing human rights, privacy, and non-discrimination laws. Multiple speakers called for harmonizing existing frameworks and toolkits, such as those from UNESCO, ITU, the EU, and OECD. Mario Nobile advocated a matrix of approaches designed to blend different regulatory mechanisms which could build trust among the different actors in the AI governance space. Participants supported IGF and PNAI’s potential and role in bridging fragmented international AI efforts and regional frameworks.

Audience Participation & Strategic Insights

A participant from South Africa raised whether AI is reproducing forms of digital apartheid by mirroring historical patterns of exclusion. Concerns were raised over the outsourcing of public-sector AI tools without sufficient human rights oversight. Researchers expressed difficulty navigating overlapping global frameworks and standards, calling for simplified, accessible governance resources. Participants proposed solutions like a “digital development tax,” African-led data infrastructure, and regional virtual labs for AI capacity-building. Strong calls emerged for civic tech and academic engagement, and inclusive youth leadership in shaping AI futures.

Session Outcomes & Recommendations

Participants widely supported IGF and PNAI as inclusive platforms for global coordination, particularly in translating community needs into actionable AI policy recommendations. PNAI

was recognized as a unique bridge between fragmented governance tracks and grassroots realities, especially through its open consultations and community-informed reports.

The session endorsed the positive role played by the PNAI in promoting trust, transparency, and accountability of AI governance and systems. Trust must be built through regulatory enforcement, inclusion, human-centric design, and redress mechanisms, not voluntary compliance.

There is a clear call for aligning regional and multilateral efforts, avoiding policy duplication, and amplifying Global South leadership in standard-setting and AI principles. Participants noted that fragmented efforts risk regulatory arbitrage and policy duplication, calling on PNAI to promote shared standards adaptable to diverse regional contexts.

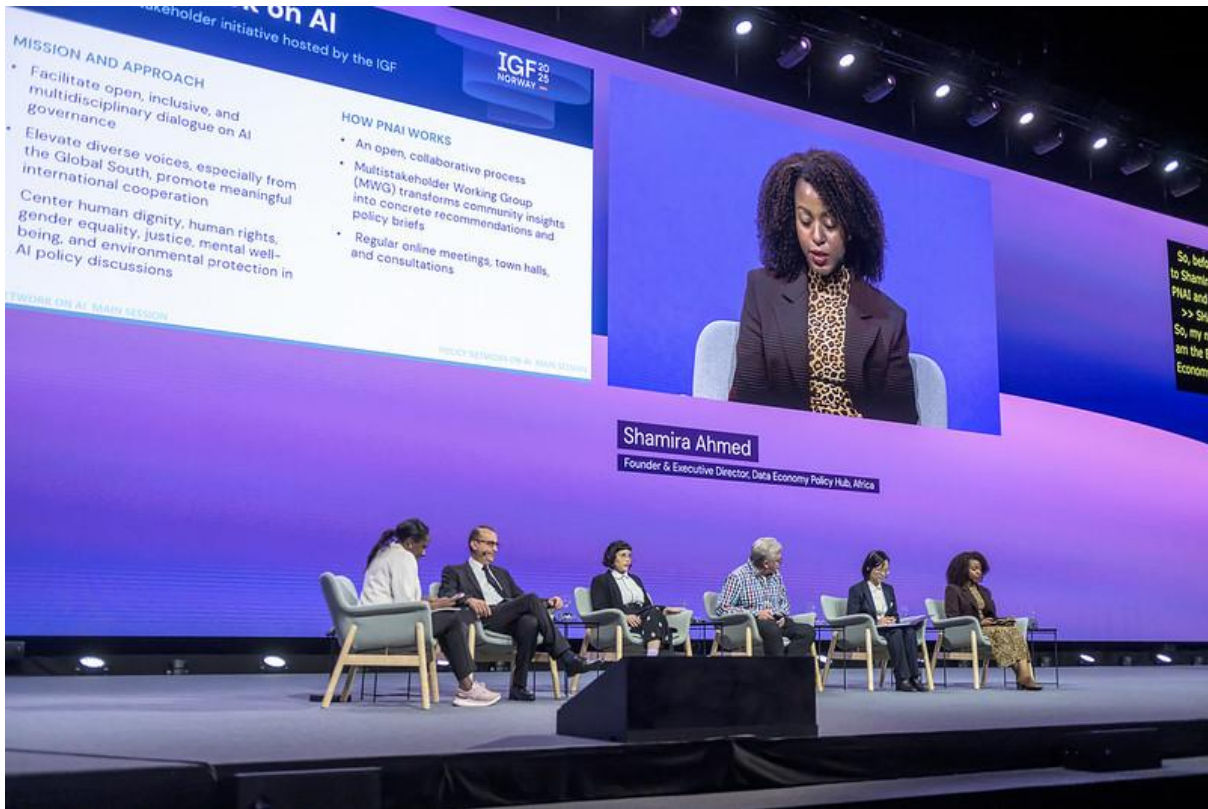
Final Speakers

- **Ivana Bartoletti**, Vice-President, Global Chief Privacy and AI Governance Officer, Wipro (WEOG)
- **William Bird**, Director, Media Monitoring Africa (Africa)
- **Paloma Lara-Castro**, Policy Director, Derechos Digitales (GRULAC)
- **Shuyan Wu**, Deputy Director of User and Market Research Department, China Mobile Research Institute (APAC)
- **Mario Nobile**, Director General, AgID Agency for Digital Italy (WEOG)
- *Moderator* - **Elizabeth Orembo**, Research Fellow, Research ICT Africa (Africa)
- *Online Moderator* - **Germán López Ardila** - Vice President, Colombian Chamber of IT and Telecoms (GRULAC)
- *Presenting PNAI's work* - **Shamira Ahmed**, Founder & Executive Director, Data Economy Policy Hub (Africa)

Session Outputs

Connection to PNAI 2025 Policy Brief:

Inputs from this session, including audience questions, Mentimeter feedback, and rapporteur observations, will directly inform the drafting of the upcoming PNAI 2025 Policy Brief. This session reaffirms the need to evolve beyond narrow technical regulation toward frameworks that prioritize social context, sustainability, labour rights, and ethical development of AI systems. The input will also guide PNAI's engagement in upcoming multistakeholder forums and dialogues for example tied to WSIS+20, the Pact for the Future, and GDC implementation.



PNAI's Shamira Ahmed opens the Main Session and invites everyone to join the Policy Network