

PROPOSAL FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITY: **Policy Network on Meaningful Access**

Version 4/2/2025

1. Why it was decided it was important to create a PNMA in 2021

The PNMA was created in 2021 as a successor of the Policy Options for Connecting and Enabling the Next Billions (CENB) and BPF on local content and a response to an increasing demand from the community to address the issue of access in an in-depth way. The rationale behind the PNMA proposal – as described in the IGF dedicate page <https://intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2024-policy-network-on-meaningful-access> – was that CENB and BPF Local Content could evolve into a more dynamic concept, to also address the situations where the access without appropriate services and contents in local languages is not the solution.

The concept of meaningful access (developed by and with inputs from multistakeholder partnerships, such as A4AI, GDIP, ISOC, APC, and adopted by some international organisations such as ITU and UNESCO) in fact has proven to be the best solution to develop digital cooperation among the part of the human population still today excluded from the access to the Internet. Bring access to developing countries in order to provide only social media in English, it doesn't make too much sense, while on the contrary, bringing Internet to provide services in the local languages, useful for the population of the regions, makes more sustainable and immediately useful the access to the Internet. For all these reasons, the efforts made by BPF on local contents (that was identifying best practices to promote new services or the digitization of old services) were married with the efforts identified by the CENB, about the best practices to incentive the creation of broadband connection in the developing countries.

2. Why it is more important than ever : Meaningful access and GDC

The concept and the importance of offering to the citizens of all the world non only access to Internet, but an access that is meaningful has been fully recognized within the Global Digital Compact, approved in 22 September 2024 in New York by the UN General Assembly during the Summit of the Future.

Meaningful access is mentioned in various points of the GDC text.

“III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

*49. Science, technology and innovation have the potential to accelerate the realization of the aspirations of the United Nations across all three pillars of its work. We will only realize this potential through international cooperation to harness the benefits and take bold, ambitious and decisive steps to bridge the growing divide within and between developed and developing countries and accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda. Billions of people, especially in developing countries, do not have **meaningful access to critical life-changing technologies**. If we are to make good on our promise to leave no one behind, sharing science, technology and innovation is essential. Innovations and scientific breakthrough that can make our planet more sustainable and our countries more prosperous and resilient should be affordable and accessible to all.*

*17/63 54. (c) Ensure that those in vulnerable situations benefit from and fully and meaningfully participate in the development and application of science, technology and innovation; 55. (a) Address barriers to full, equal and **meaningful access to and participation and leadership in science, technology and innovation** for all women and girls, including through improving education, employment and research opportunities for women and girls in areas such as science, technology, innovation, mathematics and engineering;*

From the Global Digital Compact Approved on September 22, 2024

Commitments and actions 9. We commit to pursue meaningful and measurable actions to achieve our objectives. Objective 1. Close all digital divides and accelerate progress across the Sustainable Development Goals Connectivity 10. We acknowledge the pivotal role of universal and meaningful connectivity and affordable access

*in unlocking the full potential of digital and emerging technologies. We commit to connect all persons to the Internet. We recognize that this will require strong partnerships and increased financial investments in developing countries from Governments and other stakeholders, in particular the private sector. We affirm the important role of the International Telecommunication Union **in advancing universal and meaningful connectivity and invite it to further continue its efforts**. We recognize that innovative solutions can help deliver high -speed connectivity to, inter alia, underserved, remote and rural areas.*

*11. We commit, by 2030, to: (a) Develop and strengthen targets, indicators and metrics for universal meaningful and affordable connectivity, building on existing work, and integrate these into international, regional and national development strategies (SDG 9); (b) ... We will aim for entry -level broadband subscription costs that are accessible to the widest section of the population (SDGs 1 and 9); (c) Invest in and deploy resilient digital infrastructure, including satellites and local network initiatives, that provide safe and secure network coverage to all areas, including rural, remote and “hard -to-reach” areas, and promote equitable access to satellite orbits, taking into account the needs of developing countries. **We will aim for universal access at affordable rates and at sufficient speeds as well as reliability to enable meaningful use of the Internet (SDGs 9 and 11);***

3. PNMA activities within the IGF in 2024:

Around 30 organizations and individuals from all stakeholders’ group have actively participated to the activity of this network in 2024. This can be seen through the third report of the PNMA produced in 2023: and can be tracked by the various meetings held by the network all over the year 2024 (see the page with all the records: <https://intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2024-policy-network-on-meaningful-access>).

Governments representatives (like Brazil), NGO (like APC, Global Digital Inclusion Partnership and many others); industries (such as Google, represented by Vint Cerf, to small companies such as Narval), Academia and Technical Community (such as IEEE , ICTP, ISOC, University of Jeddah) and International Organizations active in the field of access as well as in the field of contents, such as ITU and its Broadband Commission, WIPO, IFLA, ICANN and others bring their own contributions to the debate and, also, to the final session hosted at IGF 2024 in Riyadh¹.

4. Where we are with the work done

All along the year 2024 the group has actively contributed to identify a certain number of best practices and policy solutions that have been retained as possible models to be exported or applied to other regions or countries of the world.

During the year 2024 was also reorganized and revitalized a repository of the PNMA and of the previous Policy Options for Connecting and Enabling the Next Billions (CENB) and of the BPF on Local contents. In this new tool, available to the large public all best practices identified in the course of these years of existence are now gathered and made accessible: https://intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/256/28600.

5. What is planned as follow up of 2024 action plan and as intersessional work for year 2025

[2024 Policy Network on Meaningful Access Output Report](#)

In the final report produced by the group, PNMA candidates to work on the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, especially for the areas related to Access, how to make it “meaningful”, how to measures the improvement, how to propagate and spread the best practices and the successful policies identified.

PNMA chairpersons have formally asked to the Leadership Panel to submit the successful examples identified by the network to Regional institutions such as UNGA, African Union, League of Arab States and so on for implementation in their respective areas. For the future Digital Compact

¹ https://intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/256/28586

Initiative, where some experiences could be submitted to be spread around the world. For more details about the various proposals identified, see again the PNMA 2024 report².

The method adopted to produce the report was based on collaborative work with the dedicated PNMA multistakeholder working group of experts (MWG³). The community engagement was facilitated through several NRI focal points and a dedicated mailing list.

CONCLUSIONS:

For all the reasons mentioned above, the outgoing chairmanship of the PNMA (Hon. Alhagie Mbow and Giacomo Mazzone) suggest to MAG to continue this experience for 2025, ready to start as soon as possible, in order to implement the suggestions approved in the action plan 2024.

² https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/314/28585

³ The full list of MWG members in 2023 could be found here :

<https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/pnma-multistakeholder-working-group-0>