
Placeholder PNIF output report

Outline

The [IGF Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation \(PNIF\)](#) was set up in 2022 to address the question of Internet Fragmentation, to raise awareness of actions and measures that risk fragmenting the Internet, and to facilitate discussion on what could be done to avoid such fragmentation. In 2022 and 2023, the PNIF developed its [PNIF Framework for discussing fragmentation](#). The Framework conceptualises three key dimensions of fragmentation: *Fragmentation of the Internet User experience, Fragmentation of Internet Governance and Coordination, Fragmentation of the Internet's Technical Layer*. The goal of the Framework is to serve as a general guiding tool for continuing the dialogue about fragmentation and technical, political and commercial developments that may have an impact on fragmentation.

In 2024, the PNIF continued to track the global discussion on Internet fragmentation and explore ways to contribute to fostering holistic multistakeholder dialogue on fragmentation. The year was marked by the UN Summit of the Future and the Global Digital Compact (GDC), which dominated many global Internet governance debates, and significantly influenced the PNIF's work plan.

At the first PNIF webinar ([summary](#)), stakeholders reaffirmed that Internet fragmentation remains a matter of concern and stressed that it is important to be clear about what one wants to achieve by avoiding fragmentation. The socio-economic benefits of an unfragmented Internet are, however, difficult to translate into concrete indicators. At the time of the first webinar, preparations for the GDC were in their final stages. PNIF participants concluded that it was too late in the process to make a meaningful contribution to the discussions and would be better to wait for the final outcome.

In September 2024, the UN Member States convened for the *Summit of the Future* and adopted a [Pact for the Future](#) that includes a Global Digital Compact (GDC). Under GDC

Objective 3, Foster an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promotes human rights, the UN Member States commit to:

‘Promote international cooperation among all stakeholders to prevent, identify and address risks of fragmentation of the Internet in a timely manner (SDG16)’ (GDC, Objective 3, art 29, (c)).

The second PNIF webinar ([summary](#)) explored how Internet fragmentation is addressed in the GDC and what this means for the multistakeholder dialogue on fragmentation. The general sentiment was that the GDC commitment represents an important acknowledgement by the UN Member States of the risk of Internet fragmentation. However, the true measure of commitment will be the actions of governments and stakeholders. Currently, as it was pointed out, there is a notable lack of intergovernmental engagement and focussed dialogue on the issue.

A deeper dive into the interpretation of art. 29(c), amongst other at the third PNIF webinar ([summary](#)) and [PNIF main session](#) at the IGF in Riyadh, also examined other language in the GDC, including art. 26, under the same Objective 3. In this article, Member States *‘recognize that the Internet is a critical global facility for inclusive and equitable digital transformation. To fully benefit all, it must be open, global, interoperable, stable and secure.’* This raised the question of whether it can be concluded that preventing fragmentation of the Internet, as committed to in article 29(c), means preserving this open, global, interoperable, stable and secure character. It was also noted that further exploration of the link between Art.29(c) and SDG 16, ‘Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions’, would be meaningful.

In addition to focussing on understanding the GDC commitment, the PNIF invited stakeholders to reflect on how the multistakeholder dialogue on internet fragmentation can support the operationalisation of the commitment in art.29(c) and contribute to other relevant processes, such as the WSIS+10 Review. Participants agreed that the IGF and PNIF are well-positioned to continue to serve as central platform for multistakeholder discussions on identifying risks of fragmentation and ways to address them. However, it was emphasized that the responsibility for preventing and addressing fragmentation ultimately lies with policymakers. Their actions should be locally driven but accountable to the commitments outlined in the GDC. Concrete ideas were proposed for the multistakeholder community to monitor and report progress.

The PNIF Output summarises the various discussions and is intended to serve as a foundation for further multistakeholder dialogue. A recording of the PNIF main session *‘Avoiding Internet Fragmentation. Understanding and Contributing to Operationalising the the GDC Commitment’* is available on [UN Web TV](#) .
