
YESIM SAGLAM:

Good afternoon and good evening to everyone. Welcome to the fifth AFRALO Policy Forum fireside chat on the topic let's talk about internet fragmentation and multi-stakeholder internet governance taking place on Thursday, 26th of April, 2024 at 6:00 UTC. We will not be doing a roll call for the sake of time. However, all attendees both on the Zoom Room and on the phone bridge will be recorded after the call. I would like to remind all participants to please mute your lines when not speaking to prevent any background noises. Also, please make sure you state your name when taking the floor for transcription purposes. With that, I would like to thank you all for joining. And now I would like to leave the floor over to Amrita Choudhury, APRALO Chair. Over to you, Amrita. Thank you very much.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Yesim. And hello everyone to this fireside chat. We are going to have a conversation, hopefully with three esteemed speakers and individuals whom I really admire for the amazing work they do. So at the moment we have with us Chris Buckridge, who is a MAG member, also member of the ICANN Board of Directors, but is an independent consultant on internet governance and digital policy consultant. He's normally based out of Netherlands. I believe he's in Brussels now. And Pablo Hinojosa, who is the Senior Director of Engagement at APNIC from Australia. We are also supposed to have Anriette Esterhuysen joining us from South Africa. She's a Senior Advisor on Global and Regional Internet Governance Issues. In the past, she was a MAG Chair too.

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And a few months ago, we had a discussion on internet fragmentation, where we looked at it from the lenses of ICANN. But today we will have a much more broader conversation, especially how it affects the multi-stakeholder model and end-users' interests and what we need to do collaboratively. We cannot solve all issues, but what are the steps we can take? So what we will do is, I'll ask our speakers two rounds of questions. And the speakers, you are free to comment or compliment or even contradict each other's interventions. And this will be followed by an open interaction with participants. So when the open interaction starts, you can always raise your hand. But if you have a comment or even a question, you could put it into the chat with the prefix of a question or comment. And our speakers may also take it from the chat. And with that, perhaps I will ask my first question to Chris and Pablo. Okay, or Pablo first and then Chris. And the question to you would be, we are hearing the term internet fragmentation, but what does internet fragmentation mean to you? And what are the different dimensions of it? And how do you see it impacting the multi-stakeholder model and end-users? Or if there is any other thing you would want to kind of elucidate on? And perhaps you could limit the first question to about six to seven minutes. We do have time, but in the meantime, I'll also try to reach out to Andrea. So Pablo, you go first and then Chris.

PABLO HINOJOSA:

Thank you so much. It's such a pleasure to be here with this fantastic group. And thank you for the invitation. There are three things I would like to convey today. Where the topic of internet fragmentation comes from, from my point of view. Secondly, what internet fragmentation is about. And third, what can we do about it mostly from the perspective

of users? So let's start first on where I think the internet fragmentation topic comes from. And I would like to suggest that it is a phenomenon that has occurred for many years, but has not been problematized as such, but only recently perhaps in the last six or seven years. And I think it's a product of the evolution of the internet governance agenda.

And I'm talking about it since the World Summit on the Information Society process, the WSIS process, which actually happened or started 20 years ago. It's a 20 years old process or evolutionary process of internet governance. And at the beginning, we have some unresolved issues out of the summit, for example, the critical internet resources. And then part of the initial conversations of internet governance after the summit were access and openness and inclusion. So there was a lot of connectivity agenda and developmental oriented agenda.

And this agenda has evolved throughout the years. And I would like to say that the IGF is the best sample of how this agenda has evolved, the IGF being the Internet Governance Forum of course. And the IGF program, so it's an annual event and it has a program. And this program is created by this representative group of about 50 people called the Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group that Chris is part of. It's an advisory committee which is established every year and it rotates in its members. But the members are nominated by the Secretary General of the United Nations. And it's a balanced and representative group of different stakeholders of the internet, namely government, civil society, private sector, importantly as well, the technical community. Chris is part of that subgroup of the technical community in the MAG.

And this group sets the program for the yearly event of the IGF. It has been running for almost 20 years. But in my opinion, more than setting up the program of the IGF, I think they effectively shape and determine the internet governance agenda of the day. So by tracking how this agenda is evolving, you can see what is trending, what is challenging and what are the most relevant topics in internet governance. So the themes of the IGF have changed considerably and when the issue of critical internet resources was settled, then the agenda move on to other issues. For example, security and cyber norms have been important ones recently. More recently, all about artificial intelligence has been gathering traction and effectively internet fragmentation has been one of those recent trending topics in the internet governance agenda.

So I think it's a fairly sort of new problem statement of something that has been occurring for a long time. So let me go to the second part of my conversation, which is about what internet fragmentation is about. And it has come mostly from two problem statements. One is a governmental one. The other is a private sector one. The governmental one has to do with attempts to nationalize the internet experiences via firewalls or filters, gateways, different controls, where the internet experience is fragmented due to these barriers, mostly implemented by governments trying to control what comes in, what comes out and to localize the internet experience at the national level to defend their citizens from different challenges. And this of course affects the global and open nature of the internet.

Recently, we have discussed as well, and Chris knows a lot about it because he has put a lot on it in the agenda, how international

sanctions may translate in internet fragmentations. Sanctioned states have difficulty to operate in an international environment, effectively isolating communities. Also sanctions impede travel and participation, impediments to effective participation in internet governance discussions contribute to a fragmented internet because those sanctioned communities cannot have representation in their multi-stakeholder internet governance model.

So the private sector is also one that has done quite a bit to fragment the internet. And we're talking about walled gardens and market concentration. As internet companies have grown and the power has increased, they have been able to isolate the internet experience within the boundaries of their platforms and keep users within their own confines. And things such as Facebook Free Basics, I don't know if you know about it, is they provide an experience exclusively within the Facebook platform without paying any data chargers, the users. But when you exit the platform, then your data chargers start to take effect. So these effectively fragments the internet experience of the users, mainly thinking that the internet is Facebook instead of a wider network of networks.

There is of course a technical element about internet fragmentation in terms of not only operating systems like those in Android, those in iPhone, those in Xiaomi or others. There is fragmentation in protocols and standards, routing and DNS and more. And even governments may use or misuse technical means via strong regulations to fragment the internet space. So this is the case of censorship, shutdowns, firewalls, domain name takedowns, BGP filtering, and much more. Some may even suggest that IPv4 and IPv6 are two separate internet spaces and

may fragment the internet. Although for most users, whether they are on IPv4 or IPv6 networks is seamless or invisible.

The point I want to make here is that internet fragmentation can be provoked, produced, increased, implemented by different parties or stakeholders with different agendas, governments, private sector, internet operators. But this behavior has increased mostly due to geopolitical tensions. And it makes sense to some to isolate users by fragmenting the internet space.

The thing is that the internet fragmentation is something that affects users. It is an effect that is felt and suffered by users. Wherever it comes from, it is something that changes the internet experience of users that are not able to have access to an ideal one single global, open, interoperable, inclusive, stable, and secure network of networks.

So I think that's how I would frame the issue of users. Users are the ones that perceive the effects of internet fragmentation. So my third point and final point is what we can do about it. And also the topic of internet fragmentation-

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Pablo, you can come to it in the next question. Or do you have to—

PABLO HINOJOSA: I'll leave it there.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Sorry, I came in, but we wanted to, keep it for the next round. And thank you, Anriette, for joining. But Chris, we will go over to you and hear your views on what do you mean by internet fragmentation, and how do you see it manifesting concerns for multi-stakeholders and especially end users? Pablo touched upon, I would say, most of the things, but if you want to share. And also the Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation have done some work, if you also want to kind of lean on them.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: Cool, thanks, Amrita. And thank you, Pablo. And I'm agreeing with certainly everything Pablo is saying there. I think the interesting thing about fragmentation is you always need to start this discussion with a sort of very open question of what do we actually mean by fragmentation? And it's interesting because conceptually, fragmentation as an idea is this sort of antithesis to the internet. We think about the internet. It's a single, it's a holistic thing. It's intended to unite us all in being able to connect with each other. So fragmentation just as an idea is opposite to that. And that means it gets loaded down with a lot of different concepts of what it might mean. Some of which are very clearly fragmentation, others which are sort of a little bit more tangential to that concept.

And really a lot of the work, and Pablo mentioned this, that it's sort of in the last seven, eight years that it's really started to be theorized and problematized with a bit more intensity. It starts from that position. And most of the position, most of the studies and the discussions come to the conclusion that there are actually multiple things we mean by

fragmentation. So starting in 2016, the World Economic Forum did a very sort of important paper on this, which actually had authors who I'm sure many will be familiar with, Wolfgang Kleinwaechter, Vint Cerf, Bill Drake.

And this, I'm going to make sure I'm getting this correct here. It looked at basically three categories, technical fragmentation, governmental fragmentation and commercial fragmentation. So when the IGF began looking at this, it set up a policy network on fragmentation a few years ago, I think in 2021. And one of the first projects in that group and really the main focus of their annual output for that year was to do something similar, to come up with a catalog. And it tweaked things slightly. It talked about fragmentation as it relates to the user experience, fragmentation of the technical layer and fragmentation at the governance coordination layer.

So the two that I, and that sort of seemed a bit common across here that I find most interesting, I think at fragmentation of the technical layer and fragmentation at the governance and coordination layer. Now, the technical layer obviously is pretty fundamental here. If things start fragmenting at the technical layer, we have a problem. And the reason that that's a risk stems back to that very fundamental idea of the internet where it's permissionless, it's voluntary, it's everyone using the same standards and same common agreements in a voluntary nature.

And that means essentially that we have a number of areas on which we agree. We agree what are the authoritative records for the resources that we use. So that can be IP addresses. We agree on that the regional internet registries and IANA have the authoritative record on who holds

which addresses. It's also the root name zone file. Sorry, it's very early in the morning, but the root zone file for the DNS, we have to all agree on that so that we know which registries are using which strings in the DNS.

Now, on top of that, we have to agree, as I said, on who is actually maintaining and running those registries. So it's the RIRs and it's ICANN in this case. And then we have to agree on how those organizations are run. At the moment, they're running a multi-stakeholder way differently from ICANN to the RIRs, but each with their own multi-stakeholder instantiation.

The problem with fragmentation is that we start to see some or the potential for losing that agreement. And so people start to disagree on how those organizations should be run. And we've seen elements of that over the years. And WSIS was in some ways a bit of a response to that. And it's continued in a sort of more subdued way since then. But we then start to see disagreement over, okay, who should actually run these and maintain these registries? And that's, again, a discussion that hasn't entirely gone away, even though we've had some very strong agreement around the current model.

But once you start questioning that, you also start to potentially disagree on what are the actual authoritative records. And this is something where, and Pablo mentioned sanctions, we've seen some risk of that in the last few years where, for instance, when I was working at the RIPE NCC, Russia began to have issues with working with the RIPE NCC, which is an organization based in the EU and therefore subject to or having to follow EU sanctions. But that leads to a question for

Russian operators, the Russian community, the Russian government, of, well, if we can't use an update and have that RIPE record be authoritative for us, then maybe we need to break off and have our own. And at that point, the whole system begins to break down. You begin to lose any real objective authoritative truth about who is using what resource. Now, that's a risk. It's not something that we've seen happen yet, but if it were to happen, it would be a very fundamental challenge to the internet as we know it. And that's where I see the sort of real technical risk.

Now, I think one other thing I wanna touch on what Pablo mentioned here about IPv4 and IPv6, because I do think that that is an example where we as a technical community established or set up some fragmentation of our own. We did fragment the internet in a sense. And I bring it up because I think it's important in that it illustrates two points about fragmentation, because as Pablo said, most users will never have experienced any real hardship because of this fragmentation. The two points are, one, it's not binary. When we think about fragmentation, this is not, here's the internet and boom, fragmented, it's broken, it's gone. It's something that happens at a much more granular level that will start to affect.

And this is the second point, because while end users probably don't feel the pain here, I've been working, I've worked for 20 years with RIRs talking about IPv6, talking about IPv4, talking about the difficulties and the challenges that network operators had in discussing and maintaining and developing that. So making sure that users didn't feel the pain of that kind of fragmentation didn't come with no cost. It

actually required the very dedicated efforts of network operators and network operator communities around the world.

And that's the other point, is that fragmentation can be mitigated, but it doesn't come at no cost. It actually costs us all in making sure that that fragmentation doesn't happen. So it's much better, therefore, for us to be aware of the threat of fragmentation and to try and prevent it from happening early in the piece, rather than having to deal with it down the line. I think I've run over the time you set, I might stop there.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Chris, and thank you for raising this. And I think in some ways you have also responded to a question which Nabil had said, that do you think of internet fragmentation on infrastructure and DNS layer as well? So more or less, some amounts you have kind of, both you and Pablo have covered on it. So yeah, as in when you're looking at the technical layer, it doesn't matter to end users much, but when it comes to walled gardens, which Pablo was speaking about, that definitely is a fragmentation for at the user level, et cetera. Or even when we have regulations coming in by a country which restricts others, there is some sort of fragmentation.

With this, I'll move to Anriette. And Anriette, welcome, and thank you for joining us in this discussion. And you look at it from the civil society angle, but also the technical, and you've been involved in various discussions at various multilateral forums and the multi-stakeholder forums also. How do you view the internet fragmentation and how do

you see it manifesting the dimensions and its impact on the multi-stakeholder model and even end users?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She seems to have left the meeting.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Yeah, she's joining back. So in the meantime, there was another question, perhaps I'll take it by the time she joins in, is...

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN: I'm back, I'm back, Amrita. I'm sorry, my connection keeps going on and off. That's my particularly African experience of fragmentation. But if you can repeat the question, please.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Yes, Anriette, the question is, from the civil society perspective also, and you participating in various forums, even multilateral discussions, et cetera, how do you view internet fragmentation? What does it mean to you? And how do you see it manifesting? And what are the effects you see at the multi-stakeholder governance model and to end users?

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN: Thanks, Amrita, and thanks for inviting me. It's so good to see so many familiar faces. I want to pick up from what Chris said about fragmentation being not a binary. It's not as if the internet or internet governance is either fragmented or not fragmented. And I think, Chris,

that is such an important way of looking at it. On the one hand, we know the internet is resilient and robust, technically. But we also know it's not. I mean, just look at the effect of the undersea cables that were damaged a few weeks ago. We are still dealing with the lingering outcomes of that in some parts of Africa. So even our infrastructure, it all hangs together on, I think, a very complex set of relationships and actions.

And we talk about the multi-stakeholder character of the internet and internet governance. And I think we become quite glib about it because that's not just about multi-stakeholder policymaking and regulation. It also has to be about multi-stakeholder commitment and responsibility and accountability and understanding the role of different stakeholders.

And I just want to mention one example. I mean, I think for civil society, particularly for people in organizations that are working on democratization, human rights, diversity, and free media, content regulation of the internet is a real risk of increasing the fragmentation of the user experience, which I think Pablo and Chris talked about.

Now, content regulation is taking place at the national level. It takes place at the level of platforms. For example, there's a lot of censorship of content, depending on whatever the bias is of a particular platform around Gaza and the conflict in Palestine and Israel.

And I think what we need to be aware of is that, and I think sometimes I feel the technical community might be underestimating the impact of the fragmentation that results from content regulation at a national

level, for example, or content regulation at the level of platforms and social media platforms.

And I think that one of the most important ways in which we can continue to counter fragmentation, and I do think it's a continuous process, is to engage with one another as stakeholder groups and to deepen always our understanding of the priorities for different stakeholder groups. So for civil society, it's extremely important to understand that IPv6, IPv4 transition, concern, why it matters, when it matters, when it doesn't matter. Similarly, I think it's very important for the technical community to be aware of what is important for civil society, what is important for governments.

Now, we are in an era at the moment of increasing regulation of aspects of the internet. We have the emergence of very elaborate market regulation coming from Europe through the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. There are many positive aspects of that, but there are also risks. Other governments are wanting to copy aspects of that regulation.

And I think what is so concerning for me sometimes is that this is still in the absence of a really globally agreed set of principles on the character of the internet as a global public resource that should be managed and governed in the public interest and in an unfragmented way. Now, we have commitments to an unfragmented internet at the level of, let's say, the domain name space industry. We have ICANN functioning as a regulator, as a coordinator, facilitator of the DNS. We have IANA playing its role. When it comes to the numbering organizations, there's more diversity in how effective they are in playing their roles. Those of us in

Africa would be familiar with the AFRINIC experience and how challenging that has been. We now have the Global Digital Compact, and that also comes with some support, but also some challenges to the role of the IJ, for example.

But I'm probably going over time. I'm just trying to say is that when we tackle this project of maintaining an interconnected, unfragmented internet, I think we need to, on the one hand, know that it is a resilient internet and that we are quite a resilient community, but on the other hand, also continuously engage the different interest groups, the different concerns, and the different processes that are creating a kind of sometimes a counter centrifugal force in maintaining this interconnected, unfragmented internet. And we have to keep our eye on the ball, and we have to really collaborate, listen to one another, and understand one another's priorities and support one another.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Anriette, for raising such valid points from a different dimension, which sometimes many people kind of forget. And before I ask the next question, in case Pablo, Chris also wants to complement or even add to what Anriette said, and there were two questions, perhaps, while speaking, you may want to take. There was a question by Winthrop saying, would proposed protocols that would prioritize some flows violate net neutrality be considered fragmentation? There was a question from Holly, which said, given the IPv4 and IPv6 are still both in use, is that an ongoing fragmentation issue? On that, Nabil again commented that, what it seems is IPv6 has failed to replace IPv4. So these were some on the protocol aspect where possibly Pablo and Chris,

you may want to speak on when you share, if you want to compliment each other. And Sarai mentioned a question that fragmentation may lead to barriers in accessing information or impact on communication across different parts of the world, how to solve it. So perhaps Sarai's question leads to the second question, which I had for all of you, that what can we do as a community, for example, what could be the role of At-Large, which is a part of ICANN's multi-stakeholder model and in addressing these risks from fragmentation, considering ICANN goal is to have a one world, one internet and what support can we give? So these are some questions which I can, I tried to jam it together, but feel free to kind of respond to them. And Bukola also shared the question, what do we call a situation whereby you are trying to access a website and you get a pop-up of it being not available in your region? In case you find it difficult to answer now, we can also take it in the Q&A part, but Pablo, we will go with you first and then Chris and then Andrea.

PABLO HINOJOSA:

So I think that, as I've said before, the internet should be human centric and should be user focused. So how can we bring that user perspective into the problem statement of internet fragmentation? And one way to test whether there is or there isn't internet fragmentation is very simple. If you cannot see or experience something on the internet that someone else can, then you're experiencing some sort of fragmentation. And not all fragmentation needs to be or can be prevented because there is value and importance in localization. There are important intellectual property protections, et cetera. And there are also good ways and bad ways to implement localization and a more sort of localized user experience.

And some of the bad ways to implement fragmentations are sort of trickering or hacking through internet protocols or standards through BGP filtering or DNS filtering or other sort of practices. Some of those practices might be important as last resource, but again, there should be sort of good practices and bad practices about that. And yeah, I think I'll leave it there for the moment.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Chris, would you like to go next?

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: Sure. No, I think Pablo put it really nicely in a way that I sometimes struggle with in that sort of idea of localization and fragmentation. Because I think, as I said at the beginning, fragmentation is this very big concept and a lot gets loaded into it. Now, I think localization is, as Pablo said, a really important aspect. So maybe there can be very good aspects of having a different perspective on the network from different locations, be they geographical or network-based. There can also be very bad things about that and different forces, whether they be commercial or governmental, regulatory, it can create those bad examples. I wonder whether it's useful to put that into the fragmentation idea and the fragmentation discussion or whether it's better to just sort of think of those as sort of bad policy and how do we address that bad policy, which is creating problems or difficulties for people. So that's, I think, an ongoing discussion.

I think that sort of turning to, and bouncing a little off some of what Anriette was saying there about regulation, I think that sort of next

definition that we talked about, governance and coordination fragmentation, is actually a very important one for us to think about and one that we are in the midst of as opposed to the sort of technical ones where it's a bit of a risk that we're thinking about we're actually experiencing now that fragmentation of governance and coordination. And it is true, there are two elements to it, I think.

One of which is, and what Anriette was referring to, fragmentation of the regulation itself. So the application of national or in the EU case, supranational regulation, which tries to apply to essentially the internet as a sort of global phenomenon, but is not necessarily aligned with what other states are doing. And they might be doing things that conflict or don't align with that. And so that sort of idea of misaligned regulation can be problematic. And this is something that we've seen discussed in relation to AI now as well, where it's a bit of a different discussion, but the UN advisory body on AI actually identified that issue of regulatory misalignment as a real issue and looking at how to deal with it. And actually the IGF policy network on internet, sorry, on AI made some suggestions on how to mitigate that and how to sort of foster a more cohesive approach to governance of AI.

But I think the other element there is actually fragmentation of the discussion itself. And this is something we're sort of talking about a bit in relation to the global digital compact, where there is sort of a very strong push by, certainly those of us in the IGF, but also a lot of member states and other stakeholders to say, look, don't in the process of agreeing this new UN compact, spin up a whole other set of discussion venues and discussions going on. So they're proposing a new body

within the UN, they're proposing a new form of meeting to take place every two years.

Part of the problem we have is that the complexity of these issues is resulting in a lot of different work streams, a lot of different discussion spaces, which don't necessarily cohere very well. They don't sort of listen to each other. They often have different people in them. Even when you're talking about governments, they might have people from different government ministries. One area might be people from the foreign affairs ministry, one might be people from the telecommunications ministry, one might be people from law enforcement. And they're not actually sort of coordinating with each other, but they're potentially making policy or setting guidelines or best practices that could contradict each other or work against each other.

So there is a need in having a global internet, one world, one internet, to find spaces and develop foster spaces where we can bring together the many different discussions that we have to have, but try to make sure that they're working to complement each other rather than contradicting or conflicting with each other. And that's a very current and real danger for us, I think.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Chris. You know, the point which you raised is not everything is internet fragmentation, and we need to differentiate what is actually the internet fragmentation and what is policy or regulatory issues or fragmentation, I would say, brought in. And also, touching upon the latest favorite topic of ours, the GDC, as if no pun intended,

but yes, this is something which we are all concerned about. And Anriette, I'll go to you now. You know, Chris has mentioned about the GDC and the concerns even if it's not internet fragmentation, but there are concerns of some kind of an after effect, your views on that, or even the upcoming other negotiations subsequent to that.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN:

And thanks, Amrita. Look, it sounds to me increasingly that I think fragmentation is on a spectrum. And I think that as we know of many other things that are on the spectrum, they're not all bad, you know, and I think, and it shifts as well. I think as long as we are conscious of it and engaging it, I think the GDC is particularly interesting because for those of you that don't know about it, it's this global digital compact that's linked to a big UN event called the Summit of the Future, which is focused on reform of the United Nations system. And then it has these annexes. One is on future generations, really focused on engagement with youth in the future of the world, and then one on digital, and that's the global digital compact.

You know, on the one hand, this could be exactly what we need to ensure that we do not have a fragmented digital space. And there are some quite good principles in that document about the importance of inclusion and bridging the digital divide, you know, gender equality and human rights.

But then when it comes to how it thinks about the processes of coordinating discussions within the UN system and more broadly around digital governance, it sounds like it might be creating new

channels rather than reinforcing existing channels. And I think that's where we are concerned, that it could take us away from having at least a relatively, if not unfragmented or distributed, you know, interconnected internet and digital governance space. And I think actually when we look at that spectrum, I think it's also worth to consider that distributed does not necessarily mean fragmented. I think we already have a very distributed internet governance system, and with different agencies, some are multi-stakeholder, some are technical, some are national, but potentially, you know, having a distributed but harmonized internet governance space. And I think that's what we want to get out of the digital governance compact, the global digital governance compact, is recognizing this distribution, recognizing that there is diversity, different approaches, that it is multi-stakeholder, but at the same time, playing a role in ensuring that there are at least some unifying principles. And I think these unifying principles really do exist at the level of things that I think we ultimately all care about, such as participation and inclusion, and human rights, and respect for human rights.

I just want to talk about localization quickly, because that was mentioned earlier. I think we've got to be cautious about localization, and maybe as Chris was saying, we don't want to discuss that in the context of the unfragmented internet, but I think it is, it can, it's somewhere on that spectrum, and I think that, I think of localization very much like I think of human rights. You know, if my localization of, let's say, how content is controlled on the internet, what data flows are controlled, if that impacts negatively on someone else's ability to have a localized experience of the internet, then it's very problematic. And the

same way with fundamental human rights principles. If my freedom of expression becomes hate speech, then it actually impacts on other people's freedom of expression, the ones that I'm saying hateful things about.

And I think there's a similar, in human rights law, international human rights law, but good mechanisms for balancing these relationships between rights. And I think that is something we have to keep in mind when we develop internet governance, protocols, principles, and regulation, be it at the technical layer or at the content layer or any other layer for that matter. I think we've got to always consistently have checks and balances on whether what we do within our own domain might actually be creating restriction and constraints that affect others that we are not aware of.

And let's hope that the GDC, I think best case scenario is the GDC, both what is in it and then also its implementation process, that it uses the existing internet governance distributed system, including the IGF, which is kind of the public forum at the heart of that system. If it uses that and builds on that, then I think it can be a force for countering fragmentation and internet governance. But if it creates new channels, new empires, it could have the opposite effect. And I think the one we are most concerned about is that it creates a new center of power within New York, whereas in Geneva, we have the IGF, we have the International Telecommunications Union, where there are debates about internet governance we don't always like, but there are debates that we know and that we can engage in. And also the CSDD, the body within the UN that does World Summit on Information, Society Follow-up and Implementation. So we would like the GDC to endorse and

reinforce and support strengthening of those mechanisms, rather than creating a kind of a new channel coming from another part within the UN.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you, Anriette. I think we will take three questions now from the... Oh, Chris, you want to say something? Please go ahead.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: I think responding a bit to, or building maybe on what Anriette said, because I absolutely agree with what she's saying there. And I like the idea of a sort of spectrum of fragmentation as well. But I think what she's saying, they're tied in relation to localization in relation to unintended or intended sort of wider impacts that can happen from those kinds of restrictions or localization effects is really important. And kind of ties into the idea of governance and coordination fragmentation, the need to have venues for these discussions to understand exactly what the implications are. And it reminded me that one of the really interesting developments I think in the last year or so is that, I mean, and we've, as you say, had a lot of interest from different quarters about fragmentation, but UNIDIR, which is the UN research agency looking at disarmament and security and very involved in the open-ended working group on security and the cyber norms that are being created there has taken a very strong interest in fragmentation and looking at what fragmentation might mean in the security context. And I think one of the ways I see that playing out is, so much of what's happened in the GGE, the governmental group of experts and in the

open-ended working group, looking at cybersecurity and the role of states in that comes down to the need for coordination, the need for communication and mechanisms to make sure that there is understanding and opportunity to diffuse situations or address situations. And I think fragmentation of those discussions into myriad different venues that are not necessarily well-connected can have that kind of an impact as well in actually undermining the efforts we make to ensure security and to ensure that we can address security concerns when they arise.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Chris. We see two hands, one from Sébastien and one from Holly. Sébastien, you can ask the question first and if you want any particular speaker to kind of address it or if it's open for anyone, you can mention it.

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET:

Thank you very much, Amrita. And thank you for giving the floor, great conversation. I don't know if it's to one specific, I guess, the three can answer. My question is, is innovation tend to be fragmentation? You talk about IPv4 versus IPv6. I could also reference to the discussion about DNS and what it's called, so-called blockchain DNS or any alternative way to distribute the domain names. And as I have the floor, I would like to make some link between our discussion today and the discussion we had during the Cross-RALO meeting yesterday about the 10th anniversary of NetMundial and the NetMundial coming at the beginning of next week. Is NetMundial could be a place where we can

advance the idea you are pushing about governance and the fact that we don't need the multiplicity of new places to discuss those issues. Thank you very much.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you, Sébastien. Anyone wants to go first to respond to Sébastien? Anriette, Pablo, Chris.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN: I can jump in there, Sébastien. I think, yes. I think that one of the things that as a, I mean, I'm not sure that it would be good for me to see in the room when we talk about the multi-stakeholder internet governance community. Do we all have a common understanding of what that is? It would be interesting just even if people just respond in the chat. But when I use that term, the multi-stakeholder internet governance community, I today mean the numbering organizations, ICANN, the people in At-Large, those of us that are regular participants in the IGF and in national and regional IGF.

I think we have tended to take multi-stakeholder approaches and policy and participation for granted. We've become quite glib about it. We use it as a kind of a stamp, a little bit like one uses recyclable as a stamp on packaging. And we've stopped thinking about what it really means to be multi-stakeholder in a meaningful way, to adapt and adopt different approaches to multi-stakeholder policymaking or participation according to the issue that we are dealing with. And I think that has led to a kind of a, I know it's a stupid word to use, but a cheapening, a kind

of impoverization of the richness that the multi-stakeholder approach can give us.

I think ICANN, to challenge ICANN, I think ICANN in a way in itself, if you look at how civil society participation in ICANN has shifted, I think there were periods a few years ago when it might've been stronger than it is now. And I think what NetMundial+10 gives us is an opportunity to say, let's not take this way of making policy, of participating, partnering and coordinating for granted. Let's work at it, let's challenge it, let's improve it, and let's develop more principles for it as well. Because I think we even take that for granted.

And I think that's for me what the opportunity of NetMundial brings. That we, instead of this just becoming a word, a term that's kind of empty, and used to just say, okay, we need technical, we need business, we need civil society, we need government, to really apply it in a more nuanced and consistent way. And to create centers of expertise and collaboration on how to continuously improve and modify.

Ultimately, we all know that democracy is imperfect, and it's also on the spectrum. And we have parts of the world that had what we thought of as democratic governance that was working, and we don't have that anymore. And I think multi-stakeholder internet governance is the same. Let's not take it for granted, let's build on it, improve it, and let's use NetMundial+10 to try and help set such a process into motion.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Anriette. I see Chris's hand, Chris, over to you.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE:

Just to very briefly respond to the first part of Sébastien's question about innovation. And I think, absolutely, innovations in technology carry often an inherent risk of fragmentation or fragmenting the internet that we have now. That's not something we can sort of get rid of, and it's not even a problem necessarily. It's something we need to be aware of and look at as we bring new innovative technologies online and into use, how do we do that in a way that is not going to threaten the sort of global aspect of the internet? And you mentioned IPv6, IPv4, that's certainly an example that has played out over a long time. There is issues of alternative namespaces, and I think ICANN has started to try to think about how we can work with those different communities and bring them in. I think Winthrop also mentioned earlier about protocols that prioritize certain data flows. And I think all of these, part of what the fragmentation discussion leads us to is to say, okay, as we think about these new and look at these new technologies, we need to think about, is there a threat here to sort of the underlying coherence of the global internet, and then mitigate that threat.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you. Holly, your question?

HOLLY RAICHE:

I think Chris has pretty much answered it. I was really trying to flesh out more of the technical issues and the maintenance of the sort of one internet and the threats that come from the new innovations, for example, even blockchain, and what that does for the underlying

technical global nature as opposed to the other forms of fragmentation which don't upset the global nature of the internet. I think, Chris, is that where you're headed?

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE:

I think that's sort of where I was heading. I think, look, we've prided ourselves in sort of the multi-stakeholder ideal in this sort of idea that the internet is evolving very quickly and that our multi-stakeholder governance processes are agile and able to accommodate that growth and evolution and change. So change and new technologies is certainly not something we should be afraid of or working against, but we do particularly now in the age we live where so much relies upon the internet for users, for companies, for really all of us, we need to balance that sort of enthusiasm for new technologies with a sort of an awareness of how do they interact with the global internet and how can we make sure that they are building on that global nature rather than undermining it. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Chris and Holly. You know, I'll go to my last question and a brief answer would also work from all of you. What next for the At-Large community? And in case you want, you could also look at the questions which Sarai and Bukola shared. One is, "Fragmentation may lead to barriers in accessing information or impact on communication across different parts of the world. How do we solve it?" And Bukola said, "What do we call a situation where you are trying to access a website and you get a pop-up of it's not available for your region?" And

just in case you want to also look at it, but what should At-Large do or what can we do next? I would start with Pablo first and then Chris and Anriette.

PABLO HINOJOSA:

Well, some concluding remarks from me. If you run an exercise of the vision and mission statements of the probably hundreds of the organizations that do internet governance, I'm thinking about IETF, W3C, ISOC, ICANN, RIRs, ccTLDs, registries, registrars, in a way, kind of the ISTARs, most of them contain in their vision statement, in their mission statements, words or slogans such as "One world, one internet, global, open, stable and secure, interoperable, permissionless, inclusive, multi-stakeholder."

And if you think about what we have been doing for the last 30 or so years and how we have contributed to the internet governance agenda that I talked about before, I think we have contributed quite a bit on keeping the internet together. The system of unique identifiers is a glue to keep the internet together. So in a way, even if internet fragmentation came as a problem statement much later than when these organizations were founded 30, 20 or so years ago, in a way, retrospectively, we have been working to prevent internet fragmentation in all these years. And that is kind of clearly stated in those mission and vision objectives that we have set for our organizations.

Of course, the world has become much more geopolitically intense and the fragmentation challenge, I was just reading Dr. [inaudible] paper in

terms of how these geopolitics have increased the internet fragmentation challenge. So in a way, what it says is that we need to address the challenge not with the same recipes as we originally were thinking. We need to sort of step up and create better strategies to prevent further fragmentation, particularly that coming from either governments or private sector in the context of purposely attempting to isolate communities or users to have a different internet experience. Yeah, I think that's how I would like to conclude, hopefully that is of value to the audience.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you, Pablo. Thank you so much, Chris.

CHRIS BUCKRIDGE: Yeah, I haven't touched probably too much on what At-Large can do and what sort of users can do in relation to fragmentation. I think a lot of it is about awareness. It's about, as we sort of go into these discussions and I mean, At-Large obviously brings in a lot of different perspectives and use cases. It's useful to be aware of fragmentation and the different forms that it can take and the different threats, risks that it can pose. So I think a discussion like this is hopefully very helpful in that. And as we've said there, there is a lot that has been written in the last few years to help inform that as well. But understanding, okay, what are the potentials for technical fragmentation? What do we need to be sort of aware of and alert to that could undermine those technical foundations? What are the different user experiences of fragmentation and bring those experiences into the discussion?

And then in relation to sort of things like the Global Digital Compact, making sure that we're engaging and bringing forward that sort of need and importance of having some coordination and coherence rather than allowing the complexity of the issues that digital technology now presents us with to result in simply a sort of fragmented scattershot kind of discussion space where there is not coordination and understanding. So I'll leave it there, thanks.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thank you, Chris. Anriette, please.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN: Thanks, Amrita. Well, I think Pablo and Chris have said all the nice things about At-Large, and I think the diversity of At-Large makes it such a good space to have this conversation. But I think there's one area, and the pop-up, the question about pop-up, this content is not available in your region, I think really illustrates that. And that is looking at the business models of the internet. I think we completely actually underestimate and insufficiently talk about how the business models that have evolved through the advertising-based, click-based content provision that the big platforms provide, I think have in many respects distorted the internet.

And we're letting the European Union deal with it through its legislation. We like some of it, we don't like all of it. I think we need to talk more about it. Because if you have, let's take the pop-up content, if you're a regional broadcaster that funds like in South Africa, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, or the BBC, and you finance your content

through licensing fees that are paid by people in that particular region, then making that content available to everyone else doesn't actually work, it might not be financially lucrative, it could undermine the collection of licensing fees. How do you do that? Now, if you're a global platform that makes its money through advertising, that is very sophisticated, that has localized versions of it, that doesn't matter to you.

So I think part of what communities like At-Large should do, but the technical community can play a really important role in, is to look at how we can at the technical layer support more diversified business models that can actually both strengthen the creation of more entrepreneurial content and not-for-profit content provision initiatives on the internet, and to make that sustainable, and to make it available. I think we don't talk enough about diversifying business models. And we live in this world where on the one hand we have very kind of governments that are obsessed with control, that are forcing bloggers to have licenses, and on the other hand, we have huge big mega internet social media platforms that more or less can do what they want. And somehow that real potential for the internet, for diversifying and distributing opportunity, gets a little bit lost. And I think that's something that as a community, we need to continue, because that's a key characteristic of a one open and fragmented internet.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Thank you, Anriette. And thanks everyone, Pablo, Chris, for sharing your views, but it's not over for everyone. One is we want to take a picture, a group picture, which Yesim or Shah will do. And Yesim will also

multitask because she has a poll with few questions. And we will also have Justine doing some advertisement of the APRALO Policy Forum. So they will be multitasking, but whoever is going to take the photograph, those who can put on their screens, it would be great. So Yesim, all the best with your multitasking. And Justine, you can share, you can do some advertisements of the APRALO Policy Forum too.

JUSTINE CHEW:

Yeah, thank you. So thank you so much to the speakers and to you as the moderator. Excellent session. It's great to always have opportunities for speakers, especially knowledgeable speakers, to interact with our community. And not to say just the APRALO community, I also see people from other regions joining our events, and that's always a good thing. Welcome, welcome.

And well, okay. So this one, the announcement I'm going to make is probably targeted to folks who are based in Asia Pacific, right? Because we are after all APRALO. And this event is actually put together by the APRALO Policy Forum, which Shah and I sort of head up for now. And so if you are interested in joining our mailing list, I would ask that you just send an email to staff and they would probably hook you up, right? So I can put the email address in the chat. And I think a lot of you already are members of the APRALO Policy Forum. So we've just issued another call to the AP Discuss list to ask for more volunteers to join the APRALO Policy Forum, because we have a whole bunch of activities and also work that we can probably engage members in doing. Thank you for that, Amrita.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thanks, Justine and Shah. And Yesim, have you taken great pictures of us or is it still work in progress?

YESIM SAGLAM: I have. Thanks so much, Amrita.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Okay, so we have a poll for everyone. And while Yesim puts up the poll for us, I would really like to thank you, [inaudible] actually agreed to come and speak on such a short notice [inaudible] just last week. I know all of you have busy schedules, multitasking, many things, but thank you so much for this. And Yesim, your poll.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yeah, folks, so I think the poll is already in the form of a pop-up on your screen. So all you have to do is just answer the questions. And please do answer the questions because it really helps us as organizers to try and figure out what sort of other topics that you want to discuss, or maybe have webinars or appropriate events that would help ventilate whatever issues that you want to discuss or clarify. So we always run a number of webinars and fireside chats to account for these interests. Especially if you enjoyed today's session and you would like more of these kinds of sessions, then please do tell us. It always helps. So I'm just making conversation because I hate having to be in a room that is quiet. And Yesim, if you can just make a good estimate of how many people have finished the poll. And we don't actually have to see the

results. It's actually more for the organizers than anything. But if you are happy to close the poll, then we can close the poll. I'm noting that we still have four minutes, so I guess you can keep it on for longer. Amrita, did you want to do any last-minute conclusion remarks?

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

Right, thanks, Justine. And sorry, everyone, I dropped off. With internet, you never know what's happening when. But no, thank you so much. What we would do as next steps is come up with, not a report, but at least a summary of what was discussed. And share it with the community. I think what we heard is internet fragmentation exists. Not everything is bad. And not everything is internet fragmentation. And we need to kind of work on issues together. Also, it could also be for At-Large to make people aware of what is going on, what is not. And even our community, so that they are aware when regulations, et cetera, for example, come up in their countries, they can also speak up. And we can have coordinated efforts to improve whatever we are doing.

Now, there is an argument, which even Mohan was sharing in the chat, that multi-stakeholderism doesn't solve everything. It's not used everywhere, which is true. But not everything is absolutely great. We can work to improvise it. And there may be different multi-stakeholder models for different aspects. So I think that is what I would say, in case anyone else wants to share something, either you, Shah, please feel free to do so.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yes, please do. Because we try to encourage, I mean, it's great that people are putting stuff in the chat, but we also try to encourage folks to actually verbalize their opinions and even questions. So, since we're coming to the end of this session, I would hope that you be a bit more bold in the next activity. Do try and verbalize your comments or even post your questions live by actually speaking to it, rather than putting something in the chat. But of course, we understand that if you feel more comfortable doing that in chat, then by all means, we also welcome that.

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR: Yeah, but it's been perfectly timed running this way. We would have been so much longer if we all talked.

JUSTINE CHEW: That's true. It's the chair's or the moderator's prerogative, right? And we always get at least one or two comments to say that we want it to be more interactive. So, we always try to encourage interactivity, but that's a two-way street, right? So, you can ask for interactivity, but if you don't participate and make it interactive, then there's only so much we can do.

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR: Excellent. Congratulations to everybody involved.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yes, thank you for joining us. I think I saw 60 participants at one point in time. That could have been higher. I mean, I wasn't particularly paying attention throughout, but I think the highest number I saw was 60. And I think that is probably one of our highest attendance rates so far for fireside chat, if I'm not mistaken. So, well done, well done.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Right, thank you so much for joining in. And I think we're done with the poll, and Yesim said people can keep polling. Or are we still waiting for more responses, Yesim?

YESIM SAGLAM: I think we have good amounts of responses because 80% of our participants have already voted. So, I think we're good to close the poll and end the session as well, if you like.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Right, thank you so much. And we thank [Pablo,] Anriette and Chris for joining in, and all who have joined in from this region, from outside the region. Do share your comments, feedback, so that we can improve. If there is any topic you would want the APRALO Policy Forum to discuss, we would be happy to take it up. Thank you so much.

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR: Thanks, everybody. Bye.

YESIM SAGLAM: Thanks all for joining. This session is now adjourned. Have a great rest of the day. Bye-bye.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]