

**POLICY NETWORK ON MEANINGFUL ACCESS
INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM**

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE WSIS+20 ZERO DRAFT
03 October 2025**

The Policy Network on Meaningful Access (PNMA) is the IGF's intersessional activity responsible for establishing an expert-led framework network on broad Internet governance topics involving **Connectivity, Digital Inclusion and Multilingualism, and Capacity Development**. It aims to identify best practices and successful solutions in the aforementioned areas to formulate impact-driven, concrete, and actionable policy recommendations on **how to achieve meaningful and universal Internet access** aligned with the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Goals, in the frame of the Global Digital Compact's implementation process (GDC). The PNMA advocates for partnered **implementation of the policy solutions previously identified, while monitoring ongoing experiences and welcoming new practices**.

Since 2021, the Policy Network has delivered recognisable outcomes from the incremental yearly work to build knowledge and bridge communities to exchange their wins and challenges. **The PNMA leadership has actively participated in the GDC's consultations and events**, contributing to the inclusion of proper recognition and support for access policies in the document. The policy network also believes that this recognition is the right way to ensure connectivity through the provision of content in local languages and the establishment of services that actually improve communities' livelihoods.¹

Over the course of its existence, the PNMA, through its intersessional activities and dedicated IGF plenary sessions, has narrowed down the causes below as **recurring issues for access implementation globally**:

- o Persistent digital divide in lower income groups, gender, geography, age, disability and other vulnerable communities²;
- o Inadequate data to assess and monitor the progress of digital inclusion efforts³;
- o Lack of affordable and reliable infrastructure in remote and rural areas;
- o Cost and affordability of terminals and subscription fees packages in the

¹ As it is correctly mentioned in point 12 of the Zero Draft.

² Kindly refer to the Annex 1 - "Prioritized Matrix", courtesy of PNMA member GNKS Consult, for a map of digital divide by Impact (severity of exclusion if unaddressed) and Urgency (how fast action is needed to avoid long-term harm).

³ As correctly already mentioned in point 29 of the Zero Draft.

poorest regions and countries;⁴

- o Lack of cooperation among government, civil society, youth and technical community in the selection and implementation/enforcement of available policies and regulations.

The PNMA offers its expertise and its case studies as a **benchmark for the implementation of the GDC's** meaningful access objectives by making use of its **public portfolio of knowledge and activities**, open for collaboration and expansion. Most notably, the [Repository of Good Practices](#) and the endorsed list of [Literature on Meaningful Access](#), alongside the PNMA's well-established partnerships, are reliable tools to tackle access issues and to contribute to pivotal milestones around inclusivity, usefulness, sustainability, and affordability to Internet users - engaging everyone in meaningful connections and exchange.

The Policy Network on Meaningful Access invites the WSIS+20 Co-Facilitators to explore the Network's portfolio in the above-mentioned [links](#) and looks forward to discussing further combined efforts. The PNMA extends this invitation to the Office on Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET) to take the previously referred tools into account in its GDC's implementation strategy. The available knowledge and data could assist all concerned governments, donors, and specialized UN agencies with immediate identification of replicable policies to improve Internet access for the 2 billion unconnected, and acknowledge best practices that could be shared among similar regions. Moreover, by supporting Internationalized Domain Names in all local scripts, meaningful access is ensured as truly inclusive - allowing everyone, everywhere, to connect, learn, and innovate in the languages that shape their daily lives and reflect their cultures.⁵

Please refer to the Annex 2 - "Proposal of Wording Modifications or Additions to the Zero Draft" for allocation of the PNMA contribution into the draft text.

⁴ As correctly mentioned in points 18 and 28 of the Zero Draft.

⁵ As correctly already mentioned in point 30 of the Zero Draft.

ANNEX 1

Prioritized Matrix: Digital Divide Groups

Group	Impact if unaddressed	Urgency	Why prioritise
Children & disadvantaged students	Very high – permanent loss in education, skills, life chances	Very urgent	School closures & e-learning highlight the gap; long-term inequality hard to repair
Low-income households	High – exclusion from jobs, e-government, banking, health	Urgent	Affordability barriers directly widen inequality in digital societies
Rural & remote communities	High – systemic lack of broadband, economic isolation	Medium	Requires infrastructure investment; delay compounds economic lag
Women & girls (esp. in restrictive contexts)	High – limits access to education, jobs, civic life	Urgent	Gender digital gap is large in Africa, Asia, MENA; addressing it boosts overall development
Elderly people	Medium – exclusion from health, government, financial services	Urgent	Digital-by-default public services risk leaving them behind today
People with disabilities	High – barriers to employment, education, autonomy	Medium	Accessible design is possible today but adoption remains uneven
Migrants, refugees & homeless	High – loss of access to services, legal status, jobs	Medium	Connectivity crucial for integration and survival; policy gaps exist
Ethnic & linguistic minorities	Medium – loss of cultural relevance, limited participation	Medium	Language & content diversity often overlooked
Indigenous peoples	Medium – systemic isolation, cultural erosion	Medium/Low	Infrastructure + culturally relevant content essential for long-term resilience
Workers lacking digital literacy/reskilling	Medium – structural unemployment, exclusion from digital economy	Medium	Skills gap grows as automation/AI advance; mid/long-term risk

*Table courtesy of GNSK Consult, a PNMA Member.

ANNEX 2

Proposal of Wording Modifications or Additions to the Zero Draft (PNMA suggestions in italic red)

On point 11:

We recognise that the achievement of universal meaningful and affordable access to information and communications technologies and the Internet, including the ability of people in all communities to create, access and use digital technologies, is fundamental to achieving a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. *Implementation/enforcement of available policies and regulations need to be elaborated through cooperation among governments, civil society, youth, and technical community.*

On point 21:

The proportion of the world's population living in areas covered by broadband networks capable of providing effective Internet access is now over 95 per cent, with more than 90 per cent now covered by 4G networks.

Suggestion: we recommend rephrasing this paragraph because the current wording could be misleading. "Coverage at 95%" is "potential"; in most of the LDCs the real access in non-urban areas remain around 35% lower because of other problems such as affordability of devices or of subscriptions plans and meaningful access.

On point 26:

We are further concerned that other groups that experience disadvantage are under represented online, including the elderly, ethnic and linguistic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and migrants. We urge all stakeholders to include the needs of people in vulnerable situations and those in underserved, rural and remote areas in the development and implementation of national and local strategies for digital connectivity, *according to the priorities drafted in the annexed table⁶.*

On point 29:

We are committed to achieving entry-level broadband subscription *and devices* costs that are accessible to the widest section of the population.

On point 76:

We recognise that development partners, including regional development banks, and public funding have also played an important role in financing information and communications networks and services, particularly supporting their deployment in areas that have been considered commercially unviable. Innovative mechanisms, including universal access funds and community networks, have contributed to

⁶ Annex 1 of PNMA Contribution - "Prioritized Matrix".

extending connectivity in remote areas. *Some repositories of these best practices - such as the one of the IGF PNMA – are of public access and include policies that are immediately replicable and scalable elsewhere in the world ([Repository of Good Practices](#)). The available knowledge and data could assist all concerned governments, donors, and specialized UN agencies with immediate identification of policies to improve Internet access for the 2 billion unconnected, and acknowledge best practices that could be shared among similar regions.*