

Cybercrime increase worries, vulnerable groups targeted



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The 2011 Norton Cyber Crime Report says 431 million adults worldwide fell victims to cybercrime last year. Women, disabled people, schoolchildren and job-seekers continue to fall victims of cybercrime, which has reached significant proportions in South Africa and the rest of the world, worrying governments, internet experts and scarring users.



Speaking at a high level ministerial forum in Nairobi, Kenya, at the 6th annual meeting of Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which is currently discussing issues such as mobile internet, cloud computing, access and diversity, security, openness and privacy, SA minister of communications Roy Padayachie said, "It is critical that the international community collectively addresses issues of cybersecurity, cybercrime and issues affecting children, including access to inappropriate content and child pornography.

"These issues have to be addressed at a policy level and in an inclusive manner. People engaging in illegal activities on the internet can't be allowed to exist outside of legal frameworks and jurisdictions."

According to Padayachie, the international community cannot actively promote the use of the internet and development of the information society, without addressing issues of cybercrime.

Forms of cybercrime include: credit card fraud, net extortion, virus dissemination, phishing, spoofing, hacking, software piracy, cyber impersonation, pornography and denial of service (DOS).

Over 1 million victims every day

Over 1 million people become victims of cybercrime every day, while 14 adults suffer from cybercrime every second, according to the 2011 Norton Cyber Crime Report. Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable groups including youth, women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly to ensure the internet will be safe and secure for everyone.

As the problem continues to worsen in SA - the country is ranked seventh by the Federal Bureau of Investigations Internet Complaints Centre - the government said early this year that it was enacting laws and regulation to protect its citizens from any possible threat.

Well-known forms of cybercrime in SA include; increasing incidents of 419 scam [Nigerian scam, Nigerian bank scam, or Nigerian money offer], credit card fraud and rape and murder through the use social networks.

Select unique passwords

Carey van Vlaanderen, CEO of antivirus software provider ESET Southern Africa, said, "Whether accessing internet banking or popular social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter, it is crucial that passwords are unique and carefully selected."

She said a definite increase in malware seems to have worsened the scourge as social networking websites increase in popularity.

According to SA deputy minister of communications, Obed Bapela, a comprehensive cyber security policy framework for the country will be finalised in the course of the financial year.

"This policy seeks to create a secure, dependable, reliable and trustworthy cyber environment and build a confidence in the use of ICTs in general," said Bapela.

Cybercrime in Africa

Africa has a relatively small rate of internet penetration (about 10%), compared to other parts of the world, mainly due to lack of investment in technological infrastructure by governments and users. While North Africa is far ahead, sub-Saharan Africa is still lagging despite the recent increase in broadband on the continent in the past year.

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Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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