

Cyberwar is reality world must fight: UN official

July 15 2013



International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Secretary-General Hamadoun Toure speaks during a high-level meeting of the ITU on November 12, 2008 in Geneva. The international community must wake up to the reality of cyberwar and strive to find ways to stem it, Toure said Monday.

The international community must wake up to the reality of cyberwar and strive to find ways to stem it, the head of the UN's telecommunications agency said Monday.

"There is a cyberwar going on," Hamadoun Toure, secretary general of the International Telecommunication Union, said during a cybersecurity debate at the Geneva Press Club.

"Just like a conventional war, there are no winners, only destruction," he warned an audience of reporters, diplomats and technology experts.

While Toure declined to pin the blame on individual countries, such attacks have become common currency.

Russia was widely blamed for what has been dubbed the world's first [cyberwar](#), in 2007, when state and bank websites were blocked for days in Estonia, one of the world's most wired nations and a member of NATO and the European Union.

Since then, attention has focussed on China for alleged state-run [cyber attacks](#) on targets in the United States and elsewhere.

In recent weeks, pro-regime Syrian hackers and North and South Korean online warriors have also made headlines.

In an increasingly connected and Internet-dependent world, cyber attacks by governments and [criminal gangs](#) alike have the potential to wreak havoc on everything from the financial sector to key public services, Toure said.

That raises the spectre of huge [economic losses](#) and social chaos, and Toure said governments and business worldwide must think collectively about how to head that off.

"No one single entity can do it alone. We have to change the mindset. Are we mentally prepared to work with one another?" he asked.

"In this arena, there's no such thing as a superpower anymore," he said, given that it is so cheap to create viruses and launch attacks.

"It's the [human brain](#) that's driving this. So we're all equal in this, and we need to come together. That's the new order. It's not one country. It's not like a nuclear power, where the technology, the knowledge base and the infrastructure and the funding are required for that.

"We have to treat cyberspace like we treat the real world," he added.

"What's true in the real world is true in cyberspace. Some people say we're in a new environment where the rules are completely different. We're not. Because humans are at the centre of this."

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Citation: Cyberwar is reality world must fight: UN official (2013, July 15) retrieved 8 February 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-07-cyberwar-reality-world.html>

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