

CYBERCRIME – CHALLENGES FACED BY LIBERIA

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OVERVIEW

Liberia is a country situated in West Africa and has a population of approximately 4 ½ million people. The use of broadband data service in Liberia has increased substantially. The mobile penetration rate is about 75.8%. Liberia's dependency on broadband is significant with the presence of two giant telecommunication companies MTN & Orange.

As Liberia enjoys a significant share of the Africa Coast to Europe submarine fiber (ACE), E-Government applications in the financial, banking and educational sector are being utilized or established. However Liberia has become aware of the threat of cybercrime that is affecting countries and companies globally. Amidst an infrastructure that is recovering from civil war and the Ebola virus, Liberia has a high vulnerability to cyber-attack. In 2016, one of Liberia's mobile operators (MTN Liberia) was attacked with a malware – DDS (distributive denial of service). As a result of this attack, E-Government applications, like the banking and financial sectors were seriously hampered. The attack clearly indicated the urgent need for Liberia to institute measures to mitigate the effects of cyber-attacks.

WHAT LIBERIA NEEDS TO DO TO GUIDE AGAINST THESE ATTACKS

Liberia's vulnerability to cybercrime is compounded by several factors, including the lack of awareness of cybercrime and the lack of a national legal and regulatory framework. Some entities in Liberia have now become cognizant of the need to provide public awareness campaigns to sensitize stakeholders on cyber security. The Ministry of Post & Telecommunications, with help from the Digital Liberia Project, intends to carryout public awareness and sensitivity campaign for this purpose. Recently, the Liberia Telecommunications Corporation (LIBTELCO) hosted the First Cyber Security Forum to deliberate on the establishment of a national cyber-security strategy against external invaders. The forum focused on

creating awareness for cyber security and its implication for the government, the business and society.

Although the Liberian Government recognizes the threat posed by cybercrime on the global community, Liberia has no national legislation on cybercrime. Some institutions like the Central Bank of Liberia and the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications have developed policies aimed at preventing or mitigating the effects of cybercrime. The Cyber Security Policy at the CBL is a formal set of rules by which authorized users of the different technologies and systems are governed. The main purpose is to inform users: employees, contractors and other authorized users of their obligatory requirements for protecting the technology and information assets used to facilitate their work.

The National Telecommunications and ICT Policy 2010-2015 was developed by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication. However, the policy does not discuss elements related to cyber offences and cybercrime. Therefore, to address the need to promulgate a comprehensive national legislation the Liberia Telecommunications Sector has drafted a law which transposes provisions of the Ecowas Supplementary Act on Cyber Security. Provisions therein contain legal basis to prosecute perpetrators of cybercrime in Liberia. A final revision of the draft of this Act is being reviewed by the Liberia Telecom Sector and upon completion, it will be submitted to the National Legislature for enactment into Law.

ASSISTANCE NEEDED

With the rapid rate at which technology is advancing Liberia's current ICT infrastructure needs to be rebuilt and improved to make it compatible with modern standards. In addition to rebuilding the system to meet modern standards and increased capacity to deal with cybercrime issues, there is a need for increased training in technical and legal human capacity to provide expertise in dealing with cybercrime. Technical assistance for trained Liberians in cyber-attack prevention and remedy is highly desired.

It is hoped that at the end of this conference, we will benefit from the knowledge and experience from other members on the effective operations on their laws on cyber security and acquire the knowledge to contribute to ensuring the formulation

and implementation in Liberia of legislation that will be in harmony with regional cyber security legislation.