

Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell, on behalf of the European Union, on malicious cyber activities exploiting the coronavirus pandemic

As the coronavirus pandemic spreads around the world, the European Union and its Member States have observed cyber threats and malicious cyber activities targeting essential operators in Member States and their international partners, including in the healthcare sector. Since the beginning of the pandemic, significant phishing and malware distribution campaigns, scanning activities and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks have been detected, some affecting critical infrastructures that are essential to managing this crisis.

The European Union and its Member States condemn this malicious behaviour in cyberspace, express solidarity with all countries that are victims of malicious cyber activities and underline their continued support to increase global cyber resilience.

Any attempt to hamper the ability of critical infrastructures is unacceptable. All perpetrators must immediately refrain from conducting such irresponsible and destabilising actions, which can put people's lives at risk. We need the entire world to stand united in this global fight against the virus. It is a matter of humanity and universally shared values.

The European Union and its Member States share a common vision of the cyber threats and are resolute to prevent, discourage, deter and respond to them, notably through the continued exchange of information and incident handling cooperation, as well as the use of their framework for a joint EU diplomatic response to malicious cyber activities. To this end, the European Union and its Member States will further reinforce their cooperation at technical, operational, judicial and diplomatic levels, including with their international partners.

The European Union and its Member States call upon every country to exercise due diligence and take appropriate actions against actors conducting such activities from its territory, consistent with international law and the 2010, 2013 and 2015 consensus reports of the United Nations Groups of Governmental Experts (UNGGEs) in the field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The ongoing work of the sixth UNGGE and the UN Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) in the field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security is crucial to strengthening international cooperation towards a global, open, stable, peaceful and secure cyberspace where human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law fully apply.

The European Union and its Member States stand together with all those affected by the coronavirus pandemic around the world.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania^[1], the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this declaration.

^[1] The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.