Workshop report

1. Title

Anti-spam Toolkit: a multi-stakeholder, multilayered approach

2. Organizers and Panellists

Organizer: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Jean-Jacques Sahel, Department of Trade and Industry, United Kingdom; and London Action Plan.
Dimitri Ypsilanti, Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry, OECD.
Andrew Maurer, Australian Department of Communications, Information Technology and Arts.
Suresh Ramasubramanian, Outblaze, India; and APCAUCE.
Laila Zouak, Agence Nationale de Réglementation des Télécommunications (ANRT), Morocco.
Huang Chengqing, Secretary General, Internet Society of China (ISC), China.
Jonathan Curtis, Chairman of the Board of Directors for The Messaging Anti-Abuse Working Group (MAAWG).
Robert Shaw, deputy director of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU)

3. Discussion

The chair, in opening, noted that spam has become a security threat, and constitutes a major obstacle to the development of the Internet. Security breaches, viruses and botnets are in the headlines daily. In this context, action is needed to address the issue at the global level, involving developed and developing countries and emerging economies. In these countries access to the internet is severely impaired by spam and related threats, reducing the positive impact of ICTs on economic and social growth.

The chair announced the creation of a new site www.StopSpamAlliance.org, an international co-operative initiative undertaken by the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC), the EU Contact Network for Spam enforcement Authorities (CNSA), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the London Action Plan for Spam Enforcement (LAP), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Seoul-Melbourne MoU.

The website aims to provide a single entry-point for those working in the anti-spam field, and help coordinate international action against spam more effectively, improving information sharing and co-operation.

The meeting began with the OECD setting the scene by presenting the Anti-Spam Toolkit developed by the OECD Task Force. It was stressed that countries needed to begin in combating spam to ensure better co-ordination at the national level of anti-spam agencies and to improve international co-operation on spam to develop effective and harmonized anti-spam strategies.

The OECD Anti-Spam Toolkit includes eight inter-related issues, addressing regulatory approaches, enforcement concerns, industry driven initiatives, technical solutions, education and awareness tools, co-operative partnerships against spam, spam metrics, and improved cross-border cooperation.

The Toolkit and its background documents, as well as the new website constitute a good repository of material and resources which are available to all interested countries and other parties willing to take action against spam, develop comprehensive anti-spam strategies, and concretely co-operate with other stakeholders.

The discussion touched upon the different elements of a comprehensive anti-spam strategy. The importance of legislation and enforcement were stressed, at the same time reiterating that policy-makers should work with private sector operators in order to involve operators in the development of a solution and complete legislative instruments with best practices and technical solutions. The active involvement of ISPs is considered fundamental in developing countries, where enforcement authorities alone do not have the financial and technical instruments to fight spam. The importance of international co-operation and exchange was stressed by participants, together with the need for co-operation to include practical training for ISPs and policy-makers in developing countries.

Participants underlined the importance of not limiting international co-operation to government-to-government, but extending it to people on the ground, technical communities and operators.

The necessity to link co-operation with capacity building, especially in developing countries, was reiterated, in particular considering that spam – as well as malware – are evolving targets. Although recommendations already exist, training initiatives would be essential to implement these recommendations appropriately. The private sector is often not aware of these specific needs, and more information exchange should take place with countries needing support.

The anti-spam toolkit was addressing spam in particular, but indeed the multilayered approach adopted, as well as the network of stakeholders created to address this issue, will be useful also in addressing new online security threats such as malware and online fraud.

5. Possible follow-up

The OECD and APEC have decided to co-operate to analyse and provide a global picture of malware. The goal is to inform and facilitate a holistic approach for policy makers.

The OECD-APEC work on malware will address different aspects of the problem, from the technical structure of internet-based attack cycles, and how the different tools are combined to perpetrate targeted and more effective attacks, to economic considerations and regulatory issues. The work will conclude with suggested recommendations to policy makers.

6. Useful links

www.StopSpamAlliance.org (International cooperative anti-spam initiative)

www.oecd-antispam.org (OECD Anti-Spam Toolkit website)

www.oecd.org/sti/security-privacy (OECD work on security and privacy)