

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Can we take the Internet for granted?

It's never very easy for the last speaker at a pleasant event such as this. You've already heard a lot, and you're looking forward to socializing with old and new friends in the Internet community. And then on top of that, the message I start with doesn't sound very cheerful. I've also listened closely to the other speakers of course, and everyone's been talking about ways of getting even more benefits from the Internet. That's positive, it's forward-looking, and we all get more energy from it. In all these stories, the Internet is something that's taken for granted. It's just there, and it's almost impossible to imagine life without it. But is that right?

When you were on your way here, did you have any worries about the snacks and drinks? I don't think so. A New Year's event without snacks and drinks wouldn't be a New Year's event, so you never gave it a thought. I didn't either, because you have to assume that everything's been arranged. We also trust that everything's fine, and we eat and drink everything without thinking for a second if the quality has been checked.

And it's the same way with the Internet. It never occurs to us that it might not be there. Ten years ago, it wouldn't have been quite so unthinkable. The Internet was a comparative luxury in those days. If you unexpectedly couldn't use it one day, it wasn't such a great problem. Now things have changed. The Internet has become the lifeblood of modern society. The Internet is now the beating heart of our economy. But let me say this to you. This New Year's reception could still go ahead without snacks and drinks, but the economy couldn't survive without the Internet. It would collapse within a day. There would soon be thousands of bankruptcies. The credit crisis would be nothing by comparison.

Well, what on earth's this, I see you thinking. A very nice conclusion to this event to welcome in the New Year. Ms. Zielstra of the NICC is a bit heavy, isn't she? The Internet is still there, isn't it? And surely it could never go away again? Well, let me tell you that the cyber-criminals have only just begun. To them, the Internet looks like the perfect way to make a whole lot of money relatively easily. Only the other day, a guy of 23 used a spam-like script to entice thousands of people to download ringtones. He made hundreds of thousands out of

it. He was laughing when he paid the 70,000 euros fine from the consumers' authority. There are organized gangs operating out of the Ukraine who are using phishing to plunder bank accounts. There's absolutely nothing that the Dutch police or courts can do about them. And it won't stop there. Today or tomorrow someone will also find a way of making money out of bringing parts of the Internet to a standstill.

But I don't think even that is the greatest threat. The big issue over the coming ten years will be whether consumers continue to trust and have confidence in the Internet. That trust and confidence is certainly still there at the moment, but the banks have already lost it. And now we all can't understand how we could have been so dumb as to let the financial sector carry on the way it did. The problem in that sector was that there were fragments of information about the problems that were brewing in all sorts of places, but no one had the total picture. And so a gigantic crisis arose, as if from nowhere.

The same thing could happen to us. Do you know how the security of the Internet is organized and regulated? Well, the honest answer is that it isn't. The Internet belongs to everybody, and so it belongs to nobody. Just think about the glass fibre cables that we're laying everywhere at the moment. At a stroke, the upload speed will be 50 times greater. But the spammers will benefit from that too. We give far too little thought about that. There's no legislation, and scarcely any supervision is possible. Everyone takes their own measures in their own way. Firewalls, virus scanners and spam filters. But that's not what it's really about. These products won't be enough to maintain trust and confidence. I would go as far as to say that it will be impossible to maintain trust and confidence in the Internet, and even the existence of the Internet, with purely technical measures.

You have to direct yourself to people, because people are the weakest link. It's been demonstrated time and again: when something goes wrong, it's usually down to human error. But people also represent the solution. Social networks are the best protection for technical networks, and for trust and confidence. The National Infrastructure against Cybercrime is based on that idea. The hundreds of people working together in that infrastructure share a common goal: a secure cyberspace. The keywords for this successful information exchange are trust and value.

I won't tire you any more at this moment with the details of this collaboration. You can find more information in the brochure 'Public-private partnership in the Cybercrime Information Exchange'. But you may well laugh to yourself about the 'National' in our name. At the time we began, almost three years ago, there was really nothing, and 'national' represented a big ambition then. Since then, everyone has come to understand that 'borders' is a concept that comes from before the age of the Internet. The world really has become a global village, and so we must also ensure its security worldwide. International collaboration therefore, between people, people and still more people. Perhaps we must first work towards a European infrastructure.

Are we going to save it this way? I don't know. No one knows if we're winning the battle against the criminals right now or losing it. But I do think that we're doing too little at the moment. It must be more intensive, it must be more specific, and I'm sure you could add a few more qualifications of your own. The more people who do something about it, the more successful we will be. You can join us, by becoming member of 'United against Cybercrime'. You can do that via LinkedIn, for example. And we should visit each other more often. We're thinking at the moment about setting up monthly cross-sector meetings. With Chatham House in the UK, for example.

Let's get through the crisis. Let's work together on maintaining and protecting trust and confidence in the Internet. And we can only do that if we all join forces and work together. 'United against cybercrime'.

Many thanks for your attention.