



Blok: ‘EU condemns malicious behaviour in cyberspace’

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Today, six individuals and three entities that are responsible for some of the most harmful cyberattacks in recent years will be added to a sanctions list of the European Union. The sanctioned include those responsible for the disrupted Russian cyber operation against the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Sanctions will also be placed on individuals and entities from China and North Korea.

After the disruption of the cyber operation against the OPCW, the Netherlands took the initiative within the EU to press for the accelerated development of a cyber sanctions regime. Under this regime, funds within the EU of the sanctioned are frozen and the individuals in question are barred from entering the EU. ‘These sanctions are a major step forward towards a safer digital domain. For too long, the bad guys have been getting away with it,’ said Minister of Foreign Affairs Stef Blok.

The Netherlands is confronted with an increasing number of cyberattacks. Often, these are launched from outside the EU, like the one against the OPCW, which was carried out by the Russian military intelligence service GRU in The Hague in April 2018. ‘Fortunately, Dutch intelligence services managed to disrupt this,’ the minister remarked. ‘Now the EU is demonstrating that it can take effective action against malicious actors.’

Other EU member states are also facing more and more cyberattacks. In 2017, for example, the notorious WannaCry and NonPetya attacks caused enormous disruption and chaos throughout the continent. ‘The EU has a shared interest in working together against these attacks,’ said Mr Blok. ‘The time of simply issuing warnings in cyberspace is over.’

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