The Ministry of Information and Communications will host a one week-session on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime from March 18-22.

This mission is part of an In-Country support program, ICB4PAC, to provide capacity building in areas related to ICT policies and regulations. International Expert, Professor Marco Gercke is in Tonga to conduct public consultations with various stakeholders, from government entities, lawmakers and local law enforcement.

The main focus of this mission is to strengthen the capacities of local authorities, especially the Ministry of Police, when it comes to investigating Internet and computer crimes committed electronically (cybercrime). Not only does this type of workshop raise public awareness about how to prevent online crimes and protect people from becoming victims of a cybercrime, the meetings with key stakeholders will discuss key issues that Tonga faced today related to Cybercrime.

One of the biggest problems happening in Tonga as other Pacific Islands is the ‘lottery scams’, People receive an e-mail or a text message with an information that they won a lottery. Sometimes those notifications do even contain the correct name of the recipient. But it is not a real notification - it is sent by criminals. It is important therefore for people to be aware that if they respond to such emails, the criminals will either make them pay a fee or they will make them provide his bank account details and try to deduct money from his account.
Another typical scam is 'sphere phishing'. This is often happens when some people receive e-mails from e-mail addresses of people they know and sender writes that he is travelling, his wallet was stolen and he asks to help him by sending some money. Criminals break into the e-mail account of somebody from the Pacific while he is on travel. They for example do this, by obtaining the password to the e-mail account when the person logs on to the Internet through a computer system in the lobby of the hotel that the criminals infected with a malicious software that records all the keystrokes - including the password entered by the victim. After they got access to the account they send an e-mail to all his contacts and tell them that their wallet was stolen. The criminals ask for money. It is really mean because the criminals make use of the fact that people are willing to help others. The best thing to do when this happens is to either call the person or speak to his family to find out if he is really in trouble before doing anything.

These computer crimes may seem harmless, but cyber criminals are smart and target specific people and groups to that are vulnerable and unaware of such crimes, especially children, and those in rural areas including Internet users, who are unaware of cybercrimes or access to any Cyber security training.

While in Tonga, Professor Gercke will carry out specific information campaign for schools principals and educators, by providing age-specific presentations of Cybersecurity, and assess how children use the Internet and to which threats they are exposed to.

Since Cybercrime is either internet-related, computer and network-based, whereby these platforms and tools play a major role in committing of the crime, the Ministry invited IT personnel, telecommunications providers, and ISPs to intensify awareness programs and work together towards assessing methods to control and contain these cybercrime issues.

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ENDS

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