



# Department of Justice

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL LORETTA E. LYNCH DELIVERS REMARKS AT 84<sup>TH</sup>  
INTERPOL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

*Remarks as prepared for delivery*

KIGALI, RWANDA

Thank you, President [Mireille] Ballestrazzi, for that kind introduction – and for your tireless work to foster greater cooperation among the world’s law enforcement agencies. Thank you also to Secretary General [Jürgen] Stock for your leadership at Interpol (International Criminal Police Organization) and your dedication to justice. My thanks as well to my colleagues from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security who have committed so much to this organization, including Alan Bersin, Jolene Lauria [Sullens] and our National Central Bureau. And thank you to everyone who is here with us today – distinguished leaders, passionate citizens and committed partners in the work that is our common cause. It is an honor to address this eminent assembly and a privilege to be able to return to Rwanda – a country of unsurpassed beauty and tremendous resilience.

I first came to Rwanda 10 years ago to conduct a witness tampering investigation for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. As you can imagine, the stories I heard were heart-rending. How does one comfort a woman who describes surviving a churchyard massacre by hiding under a pile of dead bodies and who went to the priest the next day for sanctuary, only to be turned away? How does one promise justice to another woman who still bears the scars of the machete in her skull and who collapses in tears as she recounts how she was betrayed to the Interahamwe by someone who promised to smuggle her to safety? These and other witnesses shared their stories with me with a faith that, first and foremost, justice could be achieved and that others would be helped if they shared their pain.

Serving that tribunal brought me face to face with what can happen both to a country and to the soul of its people when the rule of law collapses and justice cannot be found. But it also reminded me of the fundamental human rights that our community of nations must defend and protect. It reaffirmed my unwavering belief that upholding the rule of law is a government’s foremost responsibility – a responsibility that must be stronger than the desire for expedience, power or vengeance. Individuals in every nation have the right to a government that prizes their citizens’ self-determination over its own desire for influence and power, and the right to expect

that no organization or individual is above the law. That is what the tribunal signified. And through the indictment of 93 perpetrators and the uncovering of buried truths, it demonstrated what the family of nations can accomplish when we find the moral resolve and the political will to work together.

It is that same commitment to collaboration and that same understanding of universal rights that fuels this important organization today. With 190 member countries and an unshakeable devotion to the rule of law, Interpol stands as an invaluable conduit for mutual assistance between law enforcement agencies across the world and a critical facilitator for international cooperation in matters of security, opportunity and human rights. You are ensuring secure global police information systems; providing round-the-clock support and operational assistance; driving innovation and fueling improvement; and expanding international capabilities to identify crimes and pursue wrongdoers. In all of your efforts, you are focused on working collaboratively to enhance the foundations and infrastructure essential to the work we share.

That work involves action against some of the most important and complex challenges of our time. You provide a network to coordinate counterterrorism aid and a partnership to help combat the threat of foreign terrorist fighters – a resource that is invaluable as we seek to stem illicit travel by individuals moving to and from conflict zones in Syria and Afghanistan. You join nations with one another in protecting cyber-security, helping to deprive cyber criminals of their mistaken sense of impunity and ensure that wrongdoers are held accountable – an effort that becomes more important every day. You assemble information on common challenges and best practices of law enforcement, helping nations to learn from one another and strengthen our procedures. In fact, the Interpol office in the United States has begun to offer Interpol members access to files in the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s National Crime Information Center, starting with data on wanted persons, firearms and stolen vehicles, in order to assist police organizations worldwide. And you are working to protect some of the most vulnerable members of our society by partnering with law enforcement agencies at all levels to exchange intelligence on human trafficking and to support action against those who exploit human beings for financial gain.

This last issue – a crime that is nothing less than modern-day slavery – is one of my highest priorities as Attorney General of the United States and one of our foremost challenges as an international community. Because human trafficking is a largely hidden crime, it is difficult to precisely estimate how many millions of women, men and children are its victims. But we do know that it occurs in countries all over the world, including the United States. It is a crime that can take many forms – from forced physical labor to forced sex to child soldiers – and whose victims range from domestic workers to schoolchildren, to farmworkers, to countless others. And with its ties to organized crime, its preying on flows of migrants and its complex financing schemes, human trafficking is a truly global problem that demands a truly global response.

Fifteen years ago, a framework for that united effort was created by two documents: the U.N. Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons and the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act, or TVPA. Together, these instruments acknowledged psychological coercion as a common factor in involuntary servitude; recognized the

effectiveness of holistic approaches involving protection, prosecution and prevention; and articulated the need for international collaboration in alleviating this heinous crime.

In the new era of resolve ushered in by the TVPA and the Palermo Protocol, Interpol has been at the forefront of the global crusade against human trafficking. Whether developing tools and systems to help the global law enforcement community share intelligence, or partnering with bodies like the Organization of American States to pool resources and exchange best practices, or conducting operations like the one last June in the Ivory Coast that led to the arrest of 25 suspects and the rescue of more than 75 children, Interpol has helped dismantle trafficking networks, shut down illegal labor operations, apprehend smugglers and kidnappers and care for survivors.

Through efforts like these, the international community has come a long way in the last 15 years. But the fact that millions of individuals remain in forced labor reminds us of how far we still have to go. In addition to the persistent scope of the problem, new challenges are emerging – particularly the rise of the Internet as a forum for traffickers and criminal gangs’ reliance on child sex trafficking as a revenue stream. As we seek to develop innovative, comprehensive and nimble responses to these evolving threats, we must find ways to work even more closely together in order to end this affront to our values and stop this crime against humanity.

I am proud to say that the United States is deeply engaged in combating this devastating threat. Under my predecessor, Attorney General Eric Holder, the U.S. Department of Justice joined the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security in launching the Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team Initiative to create specialized units of attorneys and agents from across the federal government, enabling us to more effectively identify, apprehend and prosecute human traffickers and those who offer them material support. I was proud to announce earlier this year that we would be expanding that initiative into new cities to bring to bear the full weight of our law enforcement capabilities and investigative expertise. Just last month, in close conjunction with state and local law enforcement agencies, the FBI conducted its ninth annual “Operation: Cross Country” initiative against those who traffic in children for sexual exploitation, resulting in the arrest of hundreds of sex traffickers. And through the department’s Enhanced Collaborative Model Program, we have been able to give municipalities throughout the United States tens of millions of dollars in grant funding to bring together law enforcement and victim services providers to not only ensure that traffickers are brought to justice, but to fully address the issues faced by survivors in a holistic, comprehensive and victim-centered environment.

These are important steps forward and I hope that in the months and years ahead, we will continue to join together to build on our achievements, in our own nations and around the world. That work will not be easy, but it is deeply necessary. This country – through its history – and this organization – through its design – understand the importance of making progress, one individual at a time, as difficult as it may be. Every trafficker brought to justice represents a victory against inhumanity and a safer world for all nations. Every survivor pulled from the clutches of a trafficking organization is a human life with a new opportunity to imagine his or her own destiny. And every achievement we make together is a validation of our common mission to protect the rule of law.

When I shared my experiences at the tribunal with friends some years ago, one told me that the images painted by my words made him despair of the human race. Surely, such evil condemned mankind to a life that was indeed “nasty, brutish and short.” But I was not discouraged and I was compelled to explore why not in order to answer him. And it is because, when we are confronted with the admittedly irrefutable evidence of man’s inhumanity to man, be it the betrayal of genocide or the scourge of human trafficking, the destructive impetus of terrorism or the corruption of cyberspace, we turn to the law. Not because the law is perfect, but because it is the instrument through which we forge justice: fairly, impartially and transparently, even in the face of horrific crimes. It is how we ensure that no one receives preferential treatment and that all receive equal protection. It is how we honor the memories of the fallen and assure survivors they are not alone. It is how we punish those responsible for unspeakable crimes and how we ensure the innocent are not falsely accused or wrongly convicted. And it is ultimately how we create a better future – not only for the powerful, but for every citizen in our own nations and around the world.

As we gather here today, let us resolve to remember our part in that effort. Let us pledge to stand together in that fight. And let us continue, every day, to pursue our mission of a safer world, to advance our vision of a more just society and to hold close our hope of a brighter future for all.