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REMARKS

by

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Secretary General

81st INTERPOL General Assembly session
Delegates' audience with H.H. Pope Benedict XVI
Head Of Vatican City State

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Vatican City

Your Holiness;
Your Eminence;
Excellencies;
Madame La Ministre;
Madame La Presidente
Ladies and Gentlemen,

What an honour and privilege it is to be here today and to be in the presence of Your Holiness.

It is always special when a large family gathers together and is welcomed with such warmth in the home of one of its members.

When the members of that family are from almost 200 countries, representing races and cultures from around the globe, it is unique.

In 2008, the Vatican City State joined the INTERPOL family. Since then, INTERPOL and all of our 190 member countries have been able to rely on the unwavering support of the Vatican's Gendarmerie and its highly respected Head, Domenico Giani.

I have just referred to INTERPOL as a family. Though members of the same family often have many differences, it is what they have in common that unites them and makes them a family.

Members of the INTERPOL family may speak different languages, wear different uniforms and be of different faiths or colours, but we remain firmly bound together by our shared commitment to respect and protect the dignity of persons, their fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Every day, frontline police and other law enforcement officers wake up, put on their uniforms and go to work. Work that requires them, all too often, to put themselves in harm's way to serve and protect others. They do so willingly. Why do they do it?

They know that their fellow citizens are relying on them. Police take great pride in their work, because they know they are making a difference; the difference between security and danger, between order and chaos, between hope and despair, between health and happiness and pain and suffering.

The INTERPOL family is dedicated to supporting these brave women and men. We know that a single police officer cannot do it alone. They need our help.

Organized criminal networks operate beyond the reach of any one officer or national authority. Criminal violence is at an unprecedented level. It is now responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths each year.

As the world's pre-eminent international police organization, INTERPOL brings together 190 member countries. We provide secure global communications, gather and share critically important data and police information, develop and build law enforcement capacity and, when called upon, deploy experts to the far-flung reaches of the globe wherever they may be required.

It is only by working together that we can be successful. And we have been successful. Our collective efforts have prevented terrorist attacks, saved innocent children from exploitation and disrupted criminal networks.

Sadly, however, despite our successes violence and other horrific crimes continue. We must, therefore, continue our work and seek additional and more effective ways to move forward.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Republic of Italy, especially the Ministry of the Interior and Italy's police and law enforcement authorities, for hosting both Monday's historic Ministerial meeting and the 81st INTERPOL General Assembly.

These events made possible discussions among 100 Ministers of Interior, Justice and Home Affairs and almost 1,100 delegates, including a moving address by His Excellency Monsignor Dominique Mamberti on the transcendent value of human dignity.

Yesterday we were provided with an extraordinary opportunity to visit the Vatican museums and Sistine Chapel. Today, words cannot express the honour and privilege we feel to have been given this special audience with Your Holiness.

And it has been a single, universal belief that brought all of us together: to dedicate ourselves to making the world a safer place.

Your Holiness, in your words, it was the conviction that “the loss of a single human life is a loss for mankind as a whole – and that this is a family for which we should all be responsible”.

Your Holiness, INTERPOL is committed to continuing to carry out its part in meeting this responsibility and we welcome your support and guidance in so doing.

Thank you.