

Annual State of the Organization address. In the service of frontline police to secure the world.

Opening speech by INTERPOL Secretary General [Ronald K. Noble](#)
Rio de Janeiro, 19 September 2006, 75th General Assembly

Mr. President
Members of the Executive Committee
Chiefs of Police
Heads of NCB
Fellow staff from the General Secretariat around the world
Distinguished Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

My first [General Assembly](#) as your Secretary General occurred almost exactly 5 years ago. At that time, we were all just beginning to come to terms with the meaning and impact of the [terrorist](#) attacks that had occurred in the days before that assembly on [September 11, 2001](#).

Indeed, though all of us may not have been physically present at the General Assembly that day, all of us were joined by the images of the 2nd plane crashing into the World Trade Center and images of the both towers in flames.

If I were to ask each of you right now what you were doing when you first learned of Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, each of you would remember exactly where you were and what you were doing. It is the only event for which everyone around the globe with access to a television can remember exactly where they were and what they were doing at the time.

The events of that day became one of the first tests of how we as a global law enforcement community and INTERPOL family would respond. Some people said we should cancel that General Assembly because it was too close in time to those murderous attacks. But we knew we could not. That would have handed a victory to the terrorists. Moreover, there was important work to be done – even more so than ever before.

Now, 5 years after that tragic day -- when nearly 3,000 people from over 70 countries were brutally murdered, including hundreds of our fellow law enforcement officers -- I believe we are at a critical juncture regarding the steps we must take together to answer the gathering threats of global terrorism, [human trafficking](#), [sexual exploitation of women and children](#), use of the Internet to facilitate a host of crimes, trafficking in illegal [drugs](#), and corruption which menaces the rule of the law, the development of our countries, and the integrity of our police services.

But, before discussing what our President, Executive Committee, NCB's, Member Country Police Services, and General Secretariat can do to combat the very many serious forms of transnational crime confronting us, let me take a few moments to highlight some of the ways in which the world of international law enforcement cooperation via INTERPOL has changed since 9/11. This reminder of how far we have come

together should serve to remove any doubt as to whether the ambitious initiatives we are proposing for the next 3 to 5 years are achievable.

Back in 2001, we had 179 [Member Countries](#) within the INTERPOL family. Now we have 186. Today, Serbia assumed the place previously held by Serbia and Montenegro, and today we welcomed our two newest members -- San Marino, the world's oldest republic (established in 301 AD), and Montenegro, the world's youngest republic (established in June of this year). They make fitting book ends as we now look back to what we have been able to achieve together since 9/11.

Before 9/11, police did not regard INTERPOL's General Secretariat as having any critical role to play in times of crises. Although it is hard to believe, before 9/11, INTERPOL's General Secretariat was open for work only 5 days a week, 8am to 6pm European time, and it used to take us months to circulate requested [Red Notices](#). Delivering our services to you on a real time basis was never deemed an essential element to the work of the General Secretariat. You didn't complain about the delay because you had come to expect so little from us regarding time sensitive matters.

But, on that fateful day five years ago, I promised that we would never again be irrelevant to your time sensitive needs, and that the lights would never again be turned off at INTERPOL.

And they never have been.

Before 9/11, there was no central location available to international law enforcement to serve as the first point of contact for any Member Country faced with a terrorist attack or other crisis situation.

Together, we put in place a temporary INTERPOL [Command and Coordination Centre](#) on 9/11, and have since developed it into an important component of the services that are available to you in times of need.

We committed ourselves to producing and circulating Red Notices for urgent cases within days, not months, and we now frequently produce them within hours.

But, we did not only want to remain in our offices when you needed help in your countries -- so in 2002 we created the concept of international incident response teams consisting of police from Member Countries and INTERPOL General Secretariat staff to go to your country to help you -- if and when you decide such help is necessary.

These teams can be deployed within hours of a terrorist attack or other crisis situation upon request, and we have already deployed 24 of these teams over the last five years.

In addition to wanting to help you respond to terrorist attacks, we wanted to find ways to help you prevent them.

So, for example, we created Major Event Support Teams that are available through the INTERPOL General Secretariat to help secure major events such as major sporting events or economic summits.

And this week you will hear about an ambitious effort to bring together police from around the world under the auspices of INTERPOL to help our Member Countries from the Caribbean provide a safe Cricket World Cup next Spring.

It is important to highlight that INTERPOL's General Secretariat worked closely with the Association of Caribbean Chiefs of Police, Caricom and our President, to identify a very able and experienced official from the South African Police Service, Deputy National Police Commissioner Andre Pruis, to coordinate INTERPOL's efforts to provide this support.

This is a key aspect of both our Major Event Support Teams and our Incident Response Teams. We often call upon you, our Member Countries' Police Services and NCB's, to provide the experienced officers to participate in and/or lead these teams.

But, it is one thing to have a transformation of philosophy and commitment to emergencies or major events, it is quite another to have the tools needed to make such a transformation effective on a day-to-day basis.

All of us know that if you cannot communicate, then you cannot work effectively, and you cannot cooperate effectively internationally.

Yet, before 9/11, we had a design defect in the way we shared information internationally as a law enforcement community. Back then, there was no modern, internet based communication system available to you for sending photographs, [fingerprints](#), [DNA profiles](#), and other information to one another on a secure and real time basis.

We eliminated this design defect by creating I-24/7 in 2002.

INTERPOL became the first police organization in the world to use the Internet to exchange sensitive police information in a secure way.

In less than 5 years, [I-24/7](#) has been designed and made fully operational in all but one of our Member Countries, and we have refined and perfected the speed with which we can deploy it.

For example, the second you approved Montenegro's and San Marino's candidacy to join INTERPOL, we were able to instantly make operational their connections to I-24/7. So we now have 185 out of 186 Member Countries connected to one another via I-24/7.

But, not only have we transformed the way we communicate, we have also been able to defy conventional wisdom about the kind of information our Member Countries are willing to share.

For example, before 9/11, the conventional wisdom was that countries could not share the names and other relevant information regarding suspected terrorists with all other countries because such information is too sensitive. So we framed the issue differently. We asked only for the names and information regarding those suspected terrorists you would be willing to share.

Through your work via the [Fusion Task Force](#), you have shared the names and relevant information regarding nearly 11,000 suspected terrorists to be shared with all Member Countries, 5 times more suspected terrorists than we knew about internationally before.

Before 9/11, there was no global DNA database.

We -- all of us working together -- created this database in 2002, and just this year we created an international gateway for you to compare DNA profiles anonymously and within the strictest data protection guidelines.

Before 9/11, there was no police database that gathered from the Internet images of sexually exploited children and allowed police to compare and investigate such images internationally via the Internet.

We -- all of us working together -- created this database in 2002.

Before 9/11, there was no global repository of stolen & lost travel documents available to international law enforcement.

We -- all of us working together -- created this database in 2002.

Today, with the help of our NCB's, we have logged over 12 million stolen and lost travel documents from over 100 countries into this database.

Due to technological advances that we made last year, which I will discuss shortly, the numbers of searches and hits in this database have been surging.

This has been our most ambitious initiative, and it has been endorsed by the entire world community, including the G-8, the UN Security Council, the European Union, ICAO, and others. This initiative has elevated and reinforced the roles of our NCB's in many of our Member Countries. Law enforcement officers hear about this tool, and they ask for access to it. In doing so, they learn about this and the many other services provided by our NCB's.

But, as I will mention later, we are at a critical juncture with this initiative. We have the potential to make it a real success by devoting the necessary resources to making sure it works well, or we can retard its development and not give it the attention it needs, thereby putting our citizens at greater risk to terrorist attacks and other serious transnational crime. The choice is ours – and it is an important one.

Before 9/11, there was no way for all of you to get bioterrorism prevention training.

In 2005, we created a special unit to fill this gap, and we funded it through a private donation.

Since then we have conducted regional workshops in Africa, Asia, and South America, attended by a total of 246 delegates from 92 countries. We will be conducting our next workshop in Europe (in Kiev, Ukraine) in November.

Before 9/11, we had no meaningful presence at the UN. As a result, the voice of law enforcement was rarely heard prior to UN resolutions being passed.

We changed this when we created the INTERPOL UN office in 2004 and appointed the former President of the BKA, Dr. Ulrich Kersten, to head it.

This has generated many benefits for international law enforcement.

For example, it has allowed us to create the [INTERPOL-United Nations Special Notice](#). This notice provides law enforcement with meaningful information regarding suspected Al Qaeda terrorists and Taliban members.

At the request of the UN Security Council's 1267 Committee, we have issued 257 of these notices.

As a result of this successful collaboration, last month the UN unanimously adopted a resolution to encourage other UN Security Council Sanctions Committees to work with INTERPOL.

This was the first time in history that a UN Security Council Resolution focused exclusively on the work of law enforcement through INTERPOL.

All these achievements were only possible because of the commitment and hard work of our NCB's and Member Country Police Services – working together with the dedicated staff at the General Secretariat. We have made great progress since 9/11 in developing a General Secretariat staff that is more effective and more representative of our Member Countries. We now have staff from 80 different countries, while only 58 countries were represented five years ago, and Directors from all four INTERPOL regions.

So as you can see, the world of international police cooperation via INTERPOL has changed dramatically since 9/11. But so has our understanding of the threats we face. We have come to realize that terrorism is not something that is going to disappear any time soon. We now know that it represents a long term struggle.

We thus find ourselves faced with a difficult question -- what must we do now in the years to come to meet this challenge? For me, this question defines the critical juncture at which we now find ourselves.

I have been asking myself this question for some time. Of course we must continue to build upon the tools we have created since 9/11. But I have been asking myself how we can take this fight to a whole new level. What can we do that will fundamentally change the way we cooperate.

I have been asking myself that question particularly as I travel around the world to visit our Member Countries. I have visited 102 Member Countries, so I have been puzzling over this quite a bit.

Based on my experiences in visiting our Member Countries, I think I have found an insight into the answer -- an insight I would like to share with you now. I will illustrate it with an analogy that I find meaningful -- I hope you will too.

During the World Cup, we all had our favorite teams. We wanted them to win because when they won, we won and when they lost, we lost. We felt they were part of us and we were part of them.

INTERPOL needs to engender the same kind of feeling among all police around the world. Police need to feel that they are part of INTERPOL and INTERPOL is part of them.

Yet, my experience tells me that for most of the world's police officers, this is not the way they feel about INTERPOL. On the contrary, most police officers do not feel any connection to INTERPOL at all.

To me, this is the vital missing ingredient standing between what our organization is today, and what it needs to be in order to unleash its full power in furthering our shared fight against terrorism and other serious crime.

The reason why most police officers do not feel any connection to INTERPOL is because they rarely interact with INTERPOL. As our President said yesterday morning during an Executive Committee meeting -- 'We must bring INTERPOL to the attention of the police where they work and where they are.' Only then will they feel connected to this organization, and only then can we unleash the true power of international law enforcement cooperation.

It is so important to bring the tools of international law enforcement to police officers wherever they might have a need. We have used the term police on the 'front line.' By this we simply mean that we must make all police around the world understand that they are a part of INTERPOL and INTERPOL is a part of them by giving them access to more of INTERPOL's services where they work.

As we went about connecting our Member Countries to I-24/7, our motto was -- 'no country left behind.' Now that we are about to connect the final country, our motto must become -- 'no police officer left behind.' This will take our global crime fighting to a whole new level.

This is the motivating force behind our most ambitious initiative -- the creation of technology, called MIND & FIND, that enable law enforcement officers to check our databases, particularly the SLTD database, at airports, borders, and other field locations. This technology is beginning to revolutionize the way countries conduct border security.

This system was launched in December in Switzerland, enabling instant access to INTERPOL's SLTD database for 20,000 law enforcement officers in the field. As a result, each month the Swiss conduct over 400,000 SLTD database searches. And the Swiss get results. Each month they generate over 100 hits (people found in possession of travel documents that had been reported stolen or lost).

When Switzerland started using this system, it began performing far more passports searches through the SLTD database than all other Member Countries combined -- 60 times as many.

Last month, France began using this system at Charles de Gaulle Airport. Now, France conducts 80,000 SLTD database searches every month.

This new technology is currently being tested in other countries. As more authorized law enforcement officers gain instant access to INTERPOL databases, more international criminals will be apprehended at borders, airports, and other field locations. Once we have this technology rolled out, countries will be able to add search functions in the future for fingerprints, DNA profiles, photo, and other data types – all through the same platform and infrastructure.

This is an example of the truly revolutionary things that are possible when law enforcement officers are empowered with global policing tools and become true participants in global law enforcement. It should be our priority to enable every single one of our Member Countries to benefit from these tools. To make this happen, we will set up a special fund to finance the roll out of the MIND & FIND technology.

I should mention, however, that as the volume of the SLTD database's contents, searches, and hits are growing, there is a growing need to ensure that the data is complete and accurate. It is important for all countries to contribute their data, and it is imperative that the data be accurately entered and regularly updated. It is also crucial that NCB's implement good procedures to help their fellow officers in other countries confirm the status of persons stopped based on database hits. These important matters will be the subject of a resolution that will be presented to you this week.

Another new initiative that you will hear more about this week is our proposal to establish an international anti-corruption academy. There is no doubt that fighting corruption is vital. At our Asian Regional Conference, held this year in Jakarta, Indonesia's President Yudhoyono delivered a key note speech during which he declared that corruption is 'public enemy number one.' President Selebi stated at the same conference 'corruption kills police officers and kills societies.'

But, in addition to the importance of fighting corruption, this proposed anti-corruption academy will be important for another reason – it will be a way to forge a connection between INTERPOL and officers in Member Country Police Services. Officers who go through the academy will feel connected to INTERPOL, which, in turn, will make them feel part of the international law enforcement community. And hopefully they will spread the word among their fellow officers when they return home.

Let me close by giving you a very particular example of why it is so important for officers to feel they are part of international law enforcement.

One of the emerging threats we face today is that of so-called 'home grown' terrorism. Although they are nationals of the countries they target for their attacks, today's home-grown terrorists remain a manifestation of international terrorism -- certainly in terms of ideology, allegiance, goals, and methods, and usually, if not always, in terms of direct or indirect international links to al-Qaeda as well.

If the officers who are out there on the streets actually rubbing elbows with their nationals do not feel they are part of the international law enforcement community, they will not be attuned to the need to be alert for such international links. They will miss these vital links that are so often the key to uncovering and disrupting terrorist plots. And lives will be lost.

We will be presenting you with a proposed resolution that urges countries to redouble their efforts to share information concerning terrorist groups and individuals who are active in their countries and globally, and urges countries to more fully utilize the tools available through INTERPOL. But these actions will fall far short of their terrorism prevention potential unless the actual officers throughout our countries feel that they are full partners in this fight.

Every law enforcement officer in every country has something of value to contribute. The threats are too great, and the stakes are too high, to exclude anyone. We must ensure that no law enforcement officer is left behind. That is the main message I want to convey to you today.

Finally, let me say that during this General Assembly we will have an opportunity to pass a resolution marking the 50th anniversary of our constitution and reaffirming the importance of respecting that we are an independent and apolitical organization.

Before concluding my remarks, I want to take a moment to remember three of our fellow police officers who died very recently. Superintendent Gibson Guvamombe, Head of NCB Harare, who died on July 28th after a short illness; Captain Johannes Moraka Mokhola of South Africa's Police Service, who worked at SRB Harare, and who recently died in a tragic car accident on September 10th that also claimed the lives of his wife and two children; and finally Commissaire Zogoue Bridji, Head of NCB Abidjan, who was murdered just 4 days ago during an armed robbery that was perpetrated against him. They will be missed.

[President Selebi](#), members of the [Executive Committee](#), Heads of NCB, delegates, and my dedicated staff, I thank you for your never ending support and commitment to bringing INTERPOL closer to the ideal that its founders had in mind when they created this organization 83 years ago.