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OPENING SPEECH OF THE INTERPOL PRESIDENT KHOO BOON HUI
AT THE 21ST INTERPOL AMERICAS REGIONAL CONFERENCE
6 JULY 2011 – ARUBA

The Honourable Arthur Dowers,
Minister of Justice and Education of Aruba;

Mr Ronald K Noble,
the INTERPOL Secretary General;

Mr Adolfo Ernesto Richardson,
Commissioner of Police of Aruba;

Members of the INTERPOL Executive Committee;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to the 21st INTERPOL Americas Regional Conference.

This is my first visit to this pristine and beautiful island of Aruba. When I arrived, I couldn't help but notice the symbol of "handshake" emblazoned on Aruba's official Coat of Arms. I was told that it symbolizes Aruba's strong and friendly relations with all nations and peoples. I also note that Aruba has a diverse population comprising more than 80 nationalities and this international populace now calls this island their "home away from home". It is therefore fitting to hold the INTERPOL Americas Regional Conference here where cooperation and harmony in diversity is a daily way of life.

Before I go on, let me take the opportunity to offer my appreciation, on the behalf of INTERPOL, to our gracious host, the Police Force of Aruba ably led by Commissioner Richardson, for the excellent organization of the Conference as well as the warm hospitality accorded to all of us.

At the recently concluded General Assembly of the Organization of the American States (OAS), the member states declared "crime as the public enemy number 1". This INTERPOL Americas Regional Conference is therefore timely. This conference is a powerful platform for us to:

- review our security landscape, whether current or emerging;
- brainstorm crime fighting ideas; and
- formulate crime fighting strategies and action plans

Let us work collectively, and in synergy, as a law enforcement community, to further strengthen the safety and security foundation of this region and help it achieve its immense economic potential.

Given the strong political support expressed, the onus is on us, the law enforcement community, to achieve the desired outcomes through closer and more effective coordination, collaboration and timely exchange of police information. This entails transcending from national to international policing, not just within the region but also globally. You can count on the entire INTERPOL family to support the Americas region in your battle against the threat of organized and transnational crimes.

It is evident that organized crime is a complex and transnational phenomenon. While we may be at the forefront of this fight, a successful campaign would require a multi-faceted strategy involving the collective efforts of all stakeholders. We must work better with local law enforcement institutions, international crime-fighting organizations, private sector organizations and the public.

We also need to be mindful that organized crime syndicates are evolving beyond traditional areas like drug, firearms and human trafficking. With the rapid advent in technology, criminals are re-hashing their modus operandi through cyber space and other technologically sophisticated means. This is a clear and present threat that we must invest resources to tackle and mitigate.

Criminals are increasingly trawling cyber space to take advantage of people and entities, by committing online fraud, stealing identities and private information, money laundering and the distribution of child sexual images, just to name a few. What started as simple “hacking” activities by a few individuals has now turned into a deadly organized crime enterprise with an infrastructure of multiple hackers, sophisticated equipment and other support mechanisms.

Just recently, two global financial institutions reportedly suffered major cyber attacks on their networks and servers which could potentially affect sensitive client information. In Europe, it is estimated that the cost of cyber crime has reached 750 billion Euros a year - more than the cost of illegal drug trafficking.

We have witnessed how organized crime organizations have continuously expanded their illegal operations globally. They take advantage of porous borders and the availability of modern technology. By all accounts the criminal enterprise has successfully adapted to globalization. So must we. As law enforcement, we must not lag behind or we risk failing in our sworn duties to our citizens. We must stay ahead of these criminals by:

- adopting a law enforcement approach that encompasses both the national and global perspectives;
- continuously scanning the security landscape for emerging threats and, if need be, recalibrate our crime-fighting strategies and priorities; and
- investing in research and development to come up with cutting edge and innovative solutions to mitigate emerging threats.

I know that some of our member states are already doing this. Just this week, while visiting INTERPOL Bogota, I was impressed with their cyber investigation capabilities with excellent facilities staffed by well-trained and competent experts to fight this emerging threat. It is my firm belief that we can do even better if we start leveraging on the capabilities of our member states and partner private organisations to deal with such threats effectively.

Indeed INTERPOL is evolving and adapting to the dynamic security landscape. Over past years, we have enhanced our ability to better track and adapt to changes and challenges. We are embarking on a number of major initiatives that will allow our Organization to better serve the international policing needs of member countries in the 21st century.

One of these initiatives is the expansion of our Regional Bureau in Buenos Aires which I visited last week. It is truly an impressive facility which will house our 2nd Command and Co-ordination Centre and I would like to thank the Government of Argentina for providing us such a spacious and well-located building.

Another is the INTERPOL Global Complex (IGC) in Singapore that was unanimously endorsed when we last met as a General Assembly in Doha, Qatar. I understand that on the proposed agenda, there will be an IGC progress update scheduled for Friday morning.

This morning, I would just like to state that while the IGC is situated in Asia; it is NOT established to serve the Asian region only. The IGC is a key milestone in INTERPOL's history that will augment our efforts to become a truly global institution with a strong presence across the various time zones.

We know that Asia, owing to its rapid economic growth, will see increased organized crime activities that will undermine the safety and security of the world if we do not address these threats adequately. Strategically INTERPOL needs a stronger presence in Asia than just the current liaison office that we have in Bangkok. But I want to reiterate that the IGC is a global complex that will serve all INTERPOL member countries through its focus on global innovation and capacity building, while continuing to offer regional operational police support.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to the 80th INTERPOL General Assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam, from 31 October to 3 November 2011. One of the agenda items at the General Assembly is the election for seven INTERPOL Executive Committee posts.

Five Executive Committee posts will be vacant when the incumbents' term ends, including one EC delegate for Americas. Elected members to these five posts will serve a three-year term. The remaining two Executive Committee posts, both for the Americas, will be vacant owing to the resignations of the incumbents from the EC prior to the end of their term next year. This includes the INTERPOL Vice President for Americas and one EC Delegate for Americas. Those elected to these two posts will serve the remaining one year term of office. I encourage you to consider serving our Organization by joining the Executive Committee and contribute in charting its future direction.

Let me end by reiterating that INTERPOL's successes and achievements would not be possible without your robust support and belief in the INTERPOL's mission to create a safer world. Let us all continue to work collectively to achieve this noble mission.

I wish you a productive and fulfilling conference over the next few days. Thank you and good day.