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REMARKS

by

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INTERPOL President Khoo Boon Hui;

Members of the Executive Committee;

Excellencies;

Chiefs of Police;

Heads of Delegations;

Heads of National Central Bureaus;

Colleagues from the INTERPOL General Secretariat and regional offices worldwide;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning, Bonjour, Buenos días, A Salaam Alekoum.

About two weeks ago, a young boy named Adnan Mevic celebrated his 12<sup>th</sup> birthday from the little town of Visoko, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This was probably one out of a million birthdays celebrated this month. Yet none of the others got the same deal of attention by media globally – googling Adnan’s name would bring up about 10,800 pages put online over the past four weeks.

Among them, you will see a recurring picture: that of newborn Adnan, held by then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan only hours after his birth.

You see, Adnan Mevic had been the child symbolically chosen by the United Nations as the earth’s 6 billionth inhabitant.

Yet today, 31 October 2011, only 12 years later, another birth occurred somewhere in the world which the UN states will mark the 7 billionth person joining us on this planet. Imagine that: 1 billion people more in the span of only 12 years.

In moments like this, just like Adnan on his birthday, it is natural to pause, take a breath, and look around at the world in which we find ourselves.

I am speaking about two worlds: the one where you and your police colleagues perform your duties each and every day, and the world of INTERPOL.

As your Secretary General, let me reflect what I see in the world of INTERPOL.

As I look out into this hall, I see a General Assembly rich in its diversity.

I see a General Assembly with three new member countries: Curaçao, Sint Maartin and the Republic of South Sudan.

A General Assembly that throughout its long history has taken bold steps, often in times of uncertainty, but always with the goal of helping their police colleagues make the world a safer place.

I see an Executive Committee led by a bright, energetic and hardworking President and embracing dedicated members ready to provide leadership, not by thinking of what is best for their respective countries, but what is best for all countries; what is best for INTERPOL.

I see robust National Central Bureaus breaking down barriers each and every day to make sure their countries' citizens are safer by cooperating internationally via INTERPOL.

I see my dedicated staff coming from 90 or so different countries, backgrounds and cultures, yet ready to respond to the needs of our NCBs at a moment's notice because that is what is expected from the world's largest police organization.

I see how by making INTERPOL stronger and more relevant, we actually make each and every one of our member countries safer.

How have we made INTERPOL stronger and more relevant? Through constant innovation; non-stop innovation.

Since our birth as an organization, innovation has been what has made INTERPOL the great institution that it is today.

INTERPOL was born by the decision of a handful of police leaders not to stay content; police leaders who could not lie still, and accept that yet another crime would go unpunished because borders had won over justice. They took the bold decision to come together, to cooperate and to share police information across borders.

Their world, like our world today, was one of rapid change.

The ease with which people crossed borders brought a whole new set of issues for national and local police to confront.

Officers in the field were becoming increasingly unable to identify those standing before them, frequently persons who had crossed borders.

"Who is he or she?"

"Are they wanted for arrest?"

"Are they a threat to the citizens and visitors to my country?"

These were fundamental questions that could not be easily answered back then.

Now, let's fast forward almost a century from our foundation and 80 years since our first General Assembly.

Has answering these key questions gotten any easier for police in your member countries?

What is certain, is that over the past decade those borders that stood as obstacles to police in each country, once connected to the rest of the world, have turned into our best weapons in fighting crimes internationally.

How so?

By embracing state-of-the-art technology allowing today on average more than 30,000 communication exchanges globally every single day.

By providing access to global databases able to unearth the true past of a fugitive through a name and date of birth, a DNA profile, a fingerprint or a stolen or lost travel document – tools to which in 2011 police worldwide have consulted via INTERPOL an average of 1,500 times a minute.

By maintaining a vigilant Command and Coordination Centre, ready to deploy specialized teams to assist police on the ground in responding to criminal attacks or natural disasters and in protecting major event venues. This is something we have done about 15 times a year since 2002.

By ensuring that police officers dealing with emerging crimes and cross-border offences would be properly prepared to respond. In fact, our Capacity and Training Directorate has reached 7,000 professionals worldwide in the few years since it was created.

All of the successes we have shared were made possible by our willingness to innovate – non-stop – and by our refusal to remain static in the face of an increasingly ever-changing and complex world.

Just take the past year as an example.

Without our global reach and our 24/7 support structure, we never could have coordinated operations against threats such as:

- Tons in illicit pharmaceutical products ready to be sold worldwide;
- Counterfeit items worth millions of dollars in the Americas and Africa;
- Human traffickers targeting hundreds of children for labor in Central and Western Africa, and;
- More than 60 fugitives positively located and arrested in South America alone.

Similarly, without our global communications network and our maritime piracy task force, we never would have been able to help Belgium identify and trace an individual linked to the hijacking of the ship MV Pompeii.

Nor would UAE have been able to prevent that individual wanted by Belgium from fleeing capture.

Without our innovative staff and member countries' support, the first-ever repository of images of piracy suspects would not exist, and the crew of the MV Irene, hijacked last February in the North Arabian Sea, would never have been able to identify four of their captors.

Without our close partnership with the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, we never would have been able to respond promptly to the security demands linked to the so-called Arab spring.

No Orange or Red Notices would have been issued against Colonel Gaddafi and his son Saif al Islam. No diffusion would have been issued against former President Ben Ali of Tunisia.

Finally, without Colombia's requesting a Red Notice and Portugal's consulting our databases, Guillermo Perez Trujillo would have been able to freely enter Portugal using a stolen Mexican passport, with border officers at Lisbon's airport simply unaware of his wanted fugitive status.

So yes, we are getting better at identifying individuals crossing borders, those committing crimes on foreign soil and those seeking to evade international capture.

But are we ready and prepared to face the threats in front of us?

Are we able to answer those fundamental questions about identification almost a century after our founders first met? In a world hardly recognizable if we were to look at just the last 10 years?

Let me put it another way: as law enforcement professionals, what does the 7 billionth birth in just 12 years tell us?

What should we, as law enforcement officers, focus on, to be ready to face the consequences of the billion new births expected to occur in 14 or so years?

I think Adnan Mevic gave us a hint to the answer, a few days ago, when asked what he wanted to become as an adult.

He wants to become a pilot. He dreams of global travel. Adnan wants to cross borders with speed.

The explosion in global population will push demand for increasingly scarce resources, with unprecedented incentives to cross borders, be it for good or criminal purposes.

And it will be easier and easier for both groups to cross borders.

Back in 2000, we were already overwhelmed by half a billion international air arrivals a year.

By 2010, that number had doubled. By 2014, we will be looking at 3.3 billion air arrivals worldwide.

The sheer size of the projected increase in flows of people traveling tells us that we cannot keep doing business as usual.

Last year, we allowed about half a billion people to cross borders without having their identity documents compared against INTERPOL's database of stolen and lost travel documents. Surely, we can't allow the number to double or triple in the years ahead.

That is a threat we can see and touch. Now let me draw your attention to what I referred to as the invisible threat confronting us all.

As I speak, police around the world are progressively losing what we could call the luxury of dealing with and identifying criminals face-to-face.

I am not referring only to the overwhelming increase in the international movement of goods, each of them a drop in the waves of the ocean of international trade.

I am talking about the sophisticated criminal anonymity that is on the horizon before us.

Ten years ago, roughly eight per cent of the world population had access to the internet – about 360 million individuals. Today, they exceed two billion. In 15 years, both the world population and the cyber population will grow by one billion more.

They will be communicating with one another in any of the 7,000 or so languages spoken in the world today.

Think about the size and complexity of the invisible, intangible population of three billion that will be able to cross our borders undetected, enter our homes, bank accounts, our cyberspace, with just the click of a mouse.

The difficult questions for police about identification will be the same; only this time, police won't have a name, date of birth, photo, identity document, and fingerprint or DNA specimen to compare.

Global anonymity is now an off-the-shelf product.

The question for us is how do we deal with the sheer magnitude of these challenges at a time when providing us with resources for many of our member countries is becoming more and more difficult?

Last year in Doha, Qatar, we took an important step in answering this question.

You unanimously endorsed the proposal for INTERPOL to create a Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, as the platform for the Organization's leap into the world of cyber-security, cybercrime and capacity building and training at an unprecedented level.

One member country not facing financial difficulty, Singapore, agreed to donate funds and precious real estate to build a state-of-the-art facility to host our cutting-edge work.

Back in Doha, you unanimously put your trust in our hands because you believed in our shared vision. In the next few days, you will realize how much closer we are to turning that vision into reality, only one year since that historic decision.

How the support and the tough questions from our Executive Committee, the IGCI Working Group, our Advisory Group on Financial Matters and of our staff at INTERPOL General Secretariat Headquarters in Lyon made the success of this project even more likely.

How, along the way, we already have found more member countries like Qatar, Azerbaijan and Italy and more private sector partners like EDAPS, Entrust and ITC willing to contribute resources to help ensure that our foundation in Singapore will be as solid as our foundation at INTERPOL General Secretariat Headquarters in Lyon, France.

FIFA's historical decision to donate EUR 20 million for the creation of a 10-year training program for integrity in sports at IGCI speaks for itself of how that foundation is growing in strength.

And it must be our practice that each time INTERPOL introduces an innovative concept, that innovation is secured on a solid foundation for the long term.

Many of the decisions you will be called on to take during this General Assembly will help to secure the foundation upon which INTERPOL's innovation must rest.

Our member countries can now enter more information directly into our databases, thanks to systems like I-link. This will require even stricter rules to process that information and even closer collaboration with the independent Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files.

You will be called on to ensure that the Red Notices that can now be issued faster than ever contain reliable information, and seek to punish serious offenses worthy of carrying the INTERPOL Red Notice label.

But the speed INTERPOL member countries have achieved in exchanging information must be met by the elimination of unnecessary red tape delaying officials travelling on INTERPOL business. In this regard, I am proud to announce that already 27 member countries have recognized holders of the INTERPOL passport traveling on official business as deserving of “special visa status.”

You will also be called upon to take a decision as a matter of principle. INTERPOL is an international organization whose constitution ensures that our independence and neutrality are guaranteed. That our tools and services must not be used for matters of a predominantly political, military, racial or religious nature.

We are an international organization called upon with increasing frequency by the UN to assist its member states in fighting terrorism, combating maritime piracy and supporting peacekeeping operations around the world.

It is time for our Constitution to be registered among the other 150,000 documents currently held by the UN, so that all member states will know what INTERPOL is and what it is not.

And finally, even more fundamentally, we need to radically transform the way INTERPOL draws resources to fund its tools, its services, and ultimately its mandate. We must remove the financial burden of new activities being principally funded by mandatory statutory contributions

Resilience during financial downturns should be a permanent feature of INTERPOL – today, and tomorrow.

This conviction guided us to where we are today.

The potential for INTERPOL to find additional resources outside of mandatory contributions is enormous, and cuts across the public, private and non-governmental sector.

That is why we plan to launch the INTERPOL Fund for a Safer World, which you will hear more about in the upcoming months.

In anticipation of the formal launching of this Fund, we have had silver medals minted especially for INTERPOL by the National Bank of Ukraine.

They carry INTERPOL’s symbol. They carry our vision.

We owe our thanks to one of our most reliable private sector partners, EDAPS, for designing and donating 2,000 of these coins to INTERPOL.

But quite naturally, we wanted the first set of coins minted to be received by those who make sacrifices each and every day to make INTERPOL’s achievements possible.

To you. Our member countries.

We already have awarded a few of these medals to thank our gracious hosts from Vietnam for the magnificent manner in which they have organized this General Assembly and for welcoming us with such warmth and kindness.

In addition, each Head of Delegation and each member of our advisory and governance bodies will receive a medal to mark this occasion.

Next year, during their annual meeting, a special ceremony will recognize Heads of NCBs.

Finally, we will award this medal to members of INTERPOL staff whose contribution is worthy of special recognition.

Dear colleagues, in a world celebrating the arrival of its 7 billionth guest on this day, this General Assembly may look like a tiny group on the surface of this huge planet.

Yet what we have achieved, and will continue to strive to achieve, lives in all those with whom we share this world, those who want their families and loved ones to be free of crime and harm.

INTERPOL uses the expression “For a safer world” to convey that vision. Yet in closing let me use the words of Adnan, the 12-year old to whom I referred in the beginning of my remarks, a 12-year old mature and wise beyond his years.

When asked what he hoped for the 7 billionth person to be born on this planet today, without hesitation, he said: “I wish that the birth of the 7 billionth child brings peace to the planet.”

Many challenging and sometimes delicate issues will be discussed and debated during this General Assembly. Let’s do our best to bring our member countries a step closer to realizing Adnan’s wish and the wish of so many citizens in our 190 member countries

A step closer to a safer world. A world filled with peace.

Thank you.