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REMARKS

by

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INTERPOL Secretary General

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President KHOO Boon Hui,

Mr Hussein Hazza AL-MAJALI , Director General of Public security,

Distinguished Members of INTERPOL Executive Committee from the Asian region and from around the world,

Dear Heads of NCBs and Colleagues from the Asian region,

Dear colleagues from outside the Asian Region, Head of NCB Amman, Ibrahim Abu Shwema and colleagues from Jordan,

Dear Colleagues from INTERPOL General Secretariat and Liaison Office in Bangkok,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It gives me immense pleasure to be here with all of you today, as police officials from all over Asia gather together under INTERPOL's banner.

An event already unique in itself, this conference already defied our highest expectations the moment we experienced Jordan's warm welcome and we felt the embrace of Amman's seven *jabals* (hills) around us.

Today, we gather in one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

Walk its streets – and you will almost hear history dating back to 700 BC flowing under its stones.

Meet its people – and you will see how they live up to one of Amman’s ancient names – Philadelphia – the city of harmony and brotherly love... by coincidence I began my professional career 30 years ago in the city of Philadelphia, but on another continent and in another country.

But, there are those who don’t want cities like Amman or Philadelphia to live in peace and harmony.

Just a few blocks from this building, a ballroom used to bear the name Philadelphia. Seven years ago, it had been chosen by a young couple and their families to celebrate one of the happiest days of their lives – their wedding day.

Tragically, that day Al-Qaida in Iraq had also cowardly chosen the same location as one of the targets of its November 2005 suicide bombing attack on Amman. 56 people died, including the fathers of both the bride and groom. Scores of others were injured.

Once again, terrorists had struck crossing national borders, taking innocent lives.

Unfortunately, most of our countries have been struck by terror in one form or another. The threat of terror remains a concern for us all. But, we need look no further than Amman, Jordan, as we think about how we should respond to this threat.

Today, this same city echoes with a message of hope, peace and determination not to allow the threat of terror to make people live in fear. You can feel the warmth, positive energy and peaceful atmosphere just by walking in the streets as some of us did last evening.

All of us are here this week to reinforce this simple yet powerful message. More than 150 delegates from 30 INTERPOL member countries have come together from the Red Sea to the

Pacific Ocean to recommit ourselves to cooperating across borders, to ensure that not only our countries and regions are safe, but indeed to make the entire world a safer place.

Today, together, we say: look at Asia through the eyes of INTERPOL, and you will see no borders.

Not within Asia, nor between Asia and the rest of the world.

What you will see are thousands of police officials (men and women) in uniform or in plainclothes, working day and night to protect lives, and to preserve justice that knows no boundaries.

Despite this, still too often criminals try to exploit national borders as a shield. But because of you and INTERPOL, they often fail.

It's the case of Vito Roberto PALAZZOLO, one of Italy's most wanted mafia-affiliated criminals.

Mr Palazzolo thought that by leaving Italy and Europe, he could simply escape justice. No doubt, that was his mindset as he was travelling through Bangkok International Airport last March.

Therefore his surprise, the moment he was greeted by officers of Thailand's Bureau of Immigration after rapid coordination with the INTERPOL General Secretariat and INTERPOL Liaison Office in Bangkok, is understandable.

But swift police cooperation among our member countries and their National Central Bureaus in Asia cannot be seen as surprising. Not anymore.

- Not when a single operation lasting only a few weeks leads to 20 internationally wanted child abusers being arrested or positively located in South East Asia;
- Not when a series of coordinated operations over four years against Asian illegal gambling dens results in more than 7,000 arrests, cracking down on USD 2 billion worth of illicit bets;
- And definitely not, when wildlife crime operations across Asia lead to the arrest of almost 100 individuals over the past 24 months alone.

Needless to say, these are only a few snapshots of the successes of our member countries, their INTERPOL offices and our partner organizations around Asia. They are the concrete results we have grown accustomed to over the years.

Yet no matter how familiar, they cannot mask the reality of an Organization that has changed and evolved at impressive pace since our last Asian Regional Conference.

Every single arrest carried out in Asia through INTERPOL is a testimony to the use of our tools by our member countries. Back in 2008, Asia was performing on average less than 18,000 searches a day in our databases. Last year, they were more than 500,000 – almost 30 times as many searches, in just four years!

This speaks by itself of how rapidly your trust in our tools and services as well as our efforts to extend and strengthen our network have grown.

Today, 25 countries in Asia are able to access our databases at the frontlines, at key national agencies, and from remote locations. Maintaining a secure Asia depends on how rapidly this number will increase over time.

This year, almost 20 countries in Asia are involved in our infrastructure development and equipment renewal projects.

And as I speak, INTERPOL and ASEANAPOL databases continue being integrated to become a single, powerful barrier to criminal threats to the region.

Truly, we are stepping into a new era in how Asian member countries remotely access the power of our global tools and services.

Yet we know this will not always be enough to protect the citizens of Asia.

There will be times when INTERPOL will need to step into the field with our member countries' police. We have seen it again many times over the past four years.

But in striving to respond to that call, once again we recently broke new ground.

Back in 2008, we were still facing considerable challenges in deploying personnel rapidly for our INTERPOL Major Events Support Teams and Incident Response Teams, because of red tape issues concerning getting our people to the countries that asked us for assistance.

We thus conceived an idea that to many appeared as a dream impossible to achieve: the creation of an advanced INTERPOL Travel Document – an INTERPOL passport.

Today, less than four years later, 45 member countries have already officially recognized the INTERPOL Travel Document – nine of them from this region including our host Jordan – and 120 more worldwide are in the process of doing the same within the scope of their national laws.

The lesson to be drawn is crystal clear: whenever facing a trade-off between supporting member countries and the constraints of the world around them, INTERPOL will do its best to

find practical solutions that will reinforce the Organization's strengths while maintaining the sovereignty of our member countries.

We will work day and night, make that trade-off irrelevant, and meet our mandate no matter what.

The current global financial slowdown is no exception to this rule. We see many member countries struggle in these difficult times. We hear their call to limit the growth in their statutory contributions to our budget.

Yet, at the same time, we face a growing demand for our tools and services throughout the world, Asia included.

The only possible way to meet these competing demands is to change the way INTERPOL draws resources for its activities.

In other words, to find creative opportunities to forge partnerships with external donors – both public and private – without ever losing sight of our priorities and of INTERPOL's key principles of integrity and neutrality.

Later today, we will discuss how we plan to achieve this – and how a new Working Group made of interested member countries will focus on the way our rules and governance structures must be adapted to ensure greater transparency, understanding and acceptance by our member countries to this new approach.

But let me make this point now: looking at the past few years, the facts tell us not only that this is possible, but also that the potential is enormous.

Back in 2008, we could have never imagined that in just four years INTERPOL – consistent with existing rules – would have owned and independently managed several multi-million dollar initiatives almost completely funded by external donors.

I am talking, for example, about:

- Our Environmental Crime Programme, that already coordinated so many successful operations here in Asia;
- Our ten-year Integrity in Sports Programme, financed by a EUR 20 million donation by FIFA, which will complement our enforcement operations against illegal betting with capacity building against match fixing, and which has received widespread support in all but a few of INTERPOL's 190 member countries.
- Our new global initiative against trafficking in illicit goods, which will see INTERPOL run an independent programme financed with a EUR 15 million donation by Philip Morris International.

And, finally, let me speak about another externally funded programme which I think is of special importance to many of you here.

I am talking about our Maritime Piracy Task Force activities.

Too often, maritime piracy is seen as a problem touching Asia only marginally, based on the location of pirates' attacks.

But let's focus on what should be our first concern as law enforcement officers: protecting human life. You will then understand who is paying the highest price for this menace.

Nine out of 10 seafarers currently hostage of pirates are nationals of Asian countries.

The homes they have left... are in Asia. The families that pray for their safe return... are in Asia.

This unacceptable toll was among the reasons that led INTERPOL to act, and to do so even beyond the limitations of its core budget.

Thanks to the generosity of the EU, Norway, France and the United States, that vision is now part of our reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Countering threats with creativity and innovation is what INTERPOL and its member countries do best. It is in our DNA. It is our history.

And trust me, it will be our future. Particularly here in Asia.

Four years ago, INTERPOL was struggling to find a way to enhance its central infrastructure, so that it could accommodate those new activities that would focus on emerging criminal threats like cybercrime.

In 2010 in Doha, our member countries unanimously endorsed the creation of the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore.

In July of this year, the Government of Singapore formally ratified the legal agreement for the Establishment of the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation.

Our Transition Support Office is already operational in Singapore, and what used to be a blueprint is now being built in bricks and mortar.

The future of our Organization is now. And it's a future where Asia will play a pivotal role. It could never be otherwise.

I say this, having personally visited 155 of our member countries, including 37 of INTERPOL's Asian Region member countries.

Since my first Asian Regional Conference as your Secretary General 10 years ago in Sri Lanka, the spotlight of the international community and INTERPOL have centered on Asia, and towards its impressive growth and resilience.

What had started as a hope, had soon become a promise. Now that promise has turned into a daily reality.

As I speak, the world is living challenging times – times of uncertainty. In days like this, it is natural to look for leaders able to guide us towards a better tomorrow.

Whether in the economic realm or in that of international police action, it is now time for Asia to answer that call, and lead the rest of the world.

Granted, not an easy task.

Yet INTERPOL has already witnessed true Asian leadership.

We have seen it in the field, in our Heads of National Central Bureaus from the Asian region.

We see it in our Executive Members from Asia and in their ability to guide the Organization and at times ask tough questions to its General Secretariat.

And, over the past four years, we have seen it first and foremost in our President.

Mr KHOO Boon Hui, this will be your last Asian Regional Conference as INTERPOL President. Let me once again thank you for your invaluable service.

Truly, in you INTERPOL found one of the best examples of leadership the world could have provided – a leadership forged in your intellect, integrity, dedication to policing and the rule of law as well as in your experience as Commissioner of Police in Singapore, and later in your leadership as INTERPOL President over the last four years in a way that has strengthened INTERPOL and our member countries. On a more personal note, you have become a role model, advisor, tireless supporter and dear friend.

May your example become one of the building blocks not only for a more secure Asian region and a stronger INTERPOL, but also for a safer world.

What is certain, is that Jordan's authorities have promptly followed that example, organizing and hosting this wonderful conference.

Director General AL-MAJALI,

Head of NCB Amman Ibrahim Abu Shwema,

In closing, on behalf of INTERPOL, let me once again thank you, the fine officers at NCB Amman, and the rest of Jordan's National Police and all those who have made this day possible.

Thank you.