



# **Directional Statement**

by

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**Global Virtual Event “Bridging the Gap – INTERPOL in  
times of COVID”**

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[President of INTERPOL;  
Secretary General of OECD;]  
INTERPOL Executive Committee members;  
Distinguished Chiefs of Police;  
Esteemed Heads of National Central Bureaus;  
Dear colleagues;  
Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning, Bonjour, Buenos dias, As-Salaam-Alaikum;

Last year in Santiago de Chile, you bestowed on me the honor to lead INTERPOL until 2024.

Of all the scenarios and looming challenges we foresaw on that day, a global pandemic was not among them.

Not seeing our global police community come together under a same roof is a sobering reminder of the times your countries, your police agencies, and our Organization had to endure through this crisis.

Times of deep uncertainty and turbulence; and times of challenges and sacrifice by police, worldwide. This unprecedented health crisis, in today’s globalized world, created new vulnerabilities and opened countless opportunities for criminals.

As the virus spread across the globe, crime followed, and threat actors adapted, further compounding the disruptions sweeping over our societies.

Yet disruptions are nothing new. I spoke in Santiago of the shocks that the Organization and global law enforcement have faced in the past. Shocks that together, we overcame.

Once again, police across the world face new, universal challenges. And throughout the global disruption that we endure today, your police forces have continued to adapt and serve your communities.

Protecting them from criminal harm; supporting health responders; and projecting a message of strength in crises by your governments.

And throughout these times, INTERPOL has continued to uphold our global alliance for a safer world, and provide the best possible support.

Yes, 2020 will see a gap in our long standing practice. Yet, today we are determined to bridge that gap, and bring the membership together, once again.

I would like to begin by providing an overview of INTERPOL’s operational delivery over the past year, before presenting our priorities for 2021.

From the onset of the pandemic, INTERPOL’s priority has been to ensure continuity of its support to your police forces.

When I last addressed you last year in Santiago, I shared my ambition towards 2025: *more hits, and better hits*. And even with the pandemic as backdrop, your NCBs have continued to answer the call. Expanding access to our I-24/7 network; and the criminal data you have entrusted us with has reached nearly 110 million.

Together, we have continued to make a difference in the lives of those we serve in these exceptional times:

- a young boy rescued from the clutches of his abuser with intelligence shared from the other side of the globe and analyzed by INTERPOL;
- a money launderer brought to justice after a chase through four countries in Europe, the Americas and the Middle East; and
- A murderer arrested thousands of kilometres from his country of origin with a fake passport, betrayed by his fingerprints recorded in our databases.

These are but a few recent examples of what we have achieved together, in the midst of a global pandemic.

Operational investigative support has and will continue. The I-CAN initiative, against the global threat of the 'Ndrangheta, is a case in point. Multiple suspects have already been arrested this year in Europe and the Americas.

This support continued, right to the frontlines. Following the devastating explosion in the port of Beirut last August, INTERPOL responded to the call of Lebanese authorities and deployed an Incident Response Team specialized in Disaster Victim Identification.

Just last week, an INTERPOL Support Team from our Drugs Unit was on the ground in Brazil to provide assistance to a post-seizure investigation.

This uninterrupted operational support owes largely to our successful transition to remote service delivery, and virtual exchanges.

Over the past months, we have maintained constant contact across our membership. Some 34,000 virtual meetings have been facilitated by the remote solutions provided by INTERPOL, from workshops to trainings, regional meetings and our INTERPOL Global Alliance sessions.

The vast majority of our capacity building and training activities have successfully been conducted remotely, supported by INTERPOL's Virtual Academy.

On a more personal note, our heavy reliance on remote interactions meant we could speak more frequently to each other, despite our heavy schedules.

Since my joining INTERPOL, I had never had so many direct and intensive exchanges with Chiefs of Police and Heads of NCBs. I want to thank all of you for making this possible, and for the insights you have provided me in guiding the Organization.

In parallel, we have continued to carry the voice of policing to the world stage.

I had the opportunity to represent INTERPOL at the G20 under the Presidency of Saudi Arabia for the first time in October.

And just two weeks ago, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the biannual review of its resolution on the cooperation between INTERPOL and the United Nations. INTERPOL is very grateful to Brazil and Norway for co-facilitating the resolution, and for all 56 member states who co-sponsored it. Such broad endorsement at the UN is nothing short of a historical milestone for the Organization.

I would now like to turn to our operational priorities for 2021.

INTERPOL's 2021-2025 Strategic Framework, which will be submitted to you during the next General Assembly, will chart the course for the years that follow.

Our immediate operational action in 2021 will rest firmly on three main pillars:

**First, facilitating responsiveness by foreign NCBs to your request for cooperation and information - especially in fugitive investigations.**

This is the very reason INTERPOL exists. This is what we want to see at the core of the projects and programmes we are designing.

Data. Hits. Arrests.

We will for instance build on the operational results under the El PACCTO project, and its focus on fugitives arrests in the Americas region, along with other initiatives in this area.

**Our second pillar, is bringing INTERPOL's support to the frontlines.**

Your agencies will face major incidents that will require specialized expertise from INTERPOL and its members.

We will strive to ensure that INTERPOL investigative support and incident response deployments continue where and when needed in 2021, to answer your call.

In parallel, on-the-ground support to biometric collection efforts in key operational theatres - from the Sahel, to the Sub-Sahara, to Iraq – will continue to feed our global early warning system, protecting your borders and your streets.

**Our third operational pillar will be to enhance connectivity across all nodes of our network.** We have continued to make progress on the West African Police Information System in spite of the pandemic, and will pursue activities throughout 2021.

Alongside those three pillars, 2021 will also be about the new threats COVID-19 has brought about.

Protecting at all costs the supply and distribution chains of COVID-19 vaccines from criminal actors is already among those priorities. Millions of innocents out there are counting on us all - this **cannot** become the next global criminal commodity.

The Orange Notice issued on this threat has reached all of your NCBs. I invite you to share it as widely as possible across your national and local police agencies.

The same applies to the surge in cyber-enabled financial crimes over the past months. The large-scale frauds that have been committed in the course of the COVID pandemic will put at great risk public finances, markets and economies already under threat of criminal penetration.

The recent arrests made in Nigeria, dismantling a group involved in malware campaigns thanks to cooperation with industry and INTERPOL coordination, show us that success is indeed possible

The creation of the INTERPOL Global Financial Crime Task Force will further build on them.

While we work hard to counter the threats of today – our journey towards tomorrow continues. 2021 will see INTERPOL dive even deeper into its transformation, and its commitment to innovation.

Our main focus for next year will be on automatic biometric matching solutions at the frontlines, and the development of our new INSIGHT criminal analysis platform.

In both cases, the goal is to expand the range and speed of capabilities and analytical products that will reach your officers.

The same applies to our commitment to building bridges for police to industry.

For instance, many of your police forces have flagged challenges in accessing domain name registration information from the WHOIS database, due to recent regulatory changes. In essence, the first building block in many cyber investigations had become significantly harder to reach.

To support law enforcement in this key challenge, following intense work with major private registries and registrars, INTERPOL launched the design and the pilot testing of a new restricted portal, providing automated access to domain registration information to vetted law enforcement entities.

In parallel, INTERPOL will be working on the next generation of our International Child Sexual Exploitation database, set to integrate artificial intelligence and facial recognition capabilities. Germany has already committed to provide a significant contribution to the database, and we will be looking for other countries that also wish to support this important tool.

At its core, our transformation will continue to be underpinned by strong legal foundations ensuring the Organization's integrity.

INTERPOL's transformation will continue to see the Organization brought closer to your frontlines. Even during a pandemic, we are working hard to expand our duty stations and strengthen our presence in your regions.

I am happy to report that great progress has been achieved in 2020 with the authorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the establishment of a Regional Bureau in Riyadh. We hope to be in a position to open the Regional Bureau soon.

Our efforts have also continued towards with the establishment of INTERPOL's Liaison Office for the Caribbean with the support of the CARICOM and the Government of Barbados.

The expansion of our regional presence goes hand in hand with our ongoing alignment with regional priorities.

In the Middle East, I am happy to report that INTERPOL and the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers Council are moving towards an enhanced cooperation agreement, set to include the exchange of criminal data.

INTERPOL also continues to support high priority African security initiatives such as the operationalization of AFRIPOL - through a dedicated multi-year project launched last April.

In Europe, based on the mandate received from the General Assembly in Santiago, we will be pursuing negotiations over a historical cooperation agreement with the European Union.

And we are continuing our assistance to police agencies across the Americas, through bespoke initiatives such as our Cybercrime Capacity Building Project in the region.

Our overarching vision remains to build a global security architecture anchored in a non-duplication model, to serve your police priorities.

This takes me to how we are working to build the future of INTERPOL, in the long term, and build on the lessons we have been learning.

Expectations are high on law enforcement, and with it, on INTERPOL.

The postponement of the General Assembly to 2021 was a very difficult decision, but I believe, the right decision. Our objective today is to hold statutory events planned in 2021 in person, and we are very optimistic that we will be able to meet in person in Istanbul for our 89<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

However the global situation remains unpredictable and uneven across the globe. Countries around the world are preparing to roll out vaccines, some have already started, but we cannot say now how long it will take for life to return to normal.

The General Secretariat and the Executive Committee will continue to monitor the pandemic and national and international COVID-19 prevention measures. This is why we are planning on developing alternative solutions to hold statutory events remotely should the situation still prevent physical gatherings.

In parallel, we will pursue our engagement at the ministerial and diplomatic level, to carry the voice of police, push for resources to international policing, and give visibility to your work before the international community.

We are still in the midst of very challenging times.

And as always, INTERPOL will continue to work around the clock to provide the best possible support to your agencies; as your Organization; as a catalyst of your national efforts, and guided by your collective priorities, for a safer world.

This is why we must stay in frequent contact with your NCBs, with your police forces. Maintaining this constant dialogue will be crucial to understanding your needs through these challenging times.

On a more personal note, as Secretary General I wait eagerly for the moment when I will be able to shake your hand again, welcome you into my office or visit yours, while hearing the world walking the hallways of our General Assembly, just behind the door.

Of course, remote conferences are a valuable instrument to have in our toolbox. But as police, we know how essential face-to-face meetings are to forging and maintaining strong relations.

In closing, I would like to thank those who have shared their questions, comment and concerns during my remarks. I know that this was a lot of information to share, but I hope to have successfully illustrated how this has been a very active year for INTERPOL.

I would also like to conclude by recognizing the strong commitment of the President and all members of the Executive Committee in addressing the important matters that we, as an Organization, faced throughout this unprecedented situation.

Thank you. Merci. Gracias. Shukran.