



Directional Statement

by
INTERPOL Secretary General Jürgen Stock

23 November 2021

Istanbul, Turkey

Your Excellency, Mr Süleyman Soylu, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Turkey,
Honorable Ministers from INTERPOL Member countries,
Mr Mehmet Aktaş, Director General of Turkish National Police,
INTERPOL President Kim Jong Yang,
Your Excellency, Mr Elias Murr, President of the INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World,
INTERPOL Executive Committee Members,
Distinguished Chiefs of Police,
Dear Heads of National Central Bureaus,
Representatives of observer and partner organizations,
Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,
Good morning. Bonjour. Buenos dias. As-Salaam-Alaikum. Merhaba.

On the night of September 11, 2020, an ambulance could be seen speeding through the dark streets of Central Europe.

Blue lights on; sirens screaming; paramedics in the back, racing against time.

An aneurysm. Vital signs deteriorating fast. No time to lose.

A standard message was sent to the nearest hospital, minutes away: *"prepare for arrival"*.

A single, chilling word back: *"negative"*.

Another 30 kilometers. Another hospital. Clock still ticking – another hour before treatment.

In vain.

Such were the final minutes in the life of a 78 year old innocent woman.

Unconscious, she would never learn why those hospital doors had not opened for her.

Not because her life wasn't important enough - but because there was no choice.

That hospital was under attack - its digital infrastructure crippled.

Defending itself, protecting those already lying in its beds, with half its systems out of order.

That hospital was under attack – while at the frontlines of a global war against a virus.

That hospital was under attack - because criminal money had to be made. And because a ransomware attack was the most efficient way to do so. No matter the price.

This is the story of one life, one crime, in the pandemic.
It speaks of the first lesson I learned from this new era.

Two words: No. mercy.

We saw this:

...in the stockpiles of fake COVID-19 vaccines reaching a South African warehouse;

...in the millions stolen from governments and recovered before reaching accounts in Nigeria, Singapore and beyond;

...or in the 169 forged passports seized during Operation LIBERTERRA, on their way to traffickers in Dar-es-Salaam;

...or in two parents allegedly offering an infant on the dark web, arrested by Peruvian police thanks to information from Canada and Australia;

...or in the biggest, boldest single drug shipments ever detected by law enforcement in many of your countries;

...or in the suicide bombings of Kabul, Kampala, and too many other cities struck by terrorism.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, friends,

No breathing space was left by crime during this pandemic – to your agencies, your officers, your NCBs.

They had to be ready. And they became ready, and fast - because it had to be done.

INTERPOL also had to be ready, in order to support them, as they deserved.

This had been my commitment to you in Santiago, when you chose to re-appoint me as Secretary General.

We were ready to work with your governments to keep our duty stations functional; your seconded officers safe; our lights on - 24/7; and to assist your first responders - with knowledge and expertise from abroad.

But - we were also *lucky*.

We found willing donors and projects to be re-routed to pandemic support. Experts with months left in their project contracts. And capabilities still maintained by those funds.

This may not be the case, when the next global shock hits.

INTERPOL needs to be ready, no matter the will of a single donor, or the fate of a single project.

This General Assembly will discuss a gradual, substantial increase in INTERPOL's statutory budget.

It is a significant ask to your governments, as they emerge from challenging times - I recognize this.

It is also a known ask - discussed by our membership and governance bodies over the years. One we decided to delay, to reduce the impact on your budgets.

Yet the gap between the demand from your needs; the ambition we share; and the sustainability of the Organization - is widening.

A deeper core is needed, for us to support the growth of our activities and their reach.

The pandemic and its criminal wave, tell us any further delay would be irresponsible.

Every additional Euro will go where it counts the most: your priorities as police users.

This starts with our operational delivery.

There has never been so much data in INTERPOL systems. And – increasingly - never more sensitive data.

Ransomware actors arrested in Korea, Kuwait and Romania...

The disruption of an Al-Shabaab cell in Somalia...

The arrest of a top Italian mafia narcotics broker in Brazil....

...Just three examples of our recent support activities.

A single thread connecting them: you are trusting INTERPOL with more. Therefore - we are expected to do more.

We are building a new, even more robust, real-time environment to host the live operations you will choose to conduct with INTERPOL.

You will retain INTERPOL's global reach, as needed.

You will identify the targets, and pick the countries you will want at the table.

You will be able to share the critical information that has yet to reach INTERPOL systems, and that is so needed. And, to appoint your sworn officers that will manage directly that data.

Those tenets were discussed in the hallways of our General Assembly in Santiago. That is how Project I-CAN saw the light against 'Ndrangheta, globally.

Since then, major arrests were made; more data has been shared, and more countries joined the fight. This is the blueprint for the next threat.

Among the most urgent is the financial crime epidemic, which your agencies are witnessing.

2022 will see INTERPOL's first Global Financial Crime Strategy, the creation of dedicated directorate at our General Secretariat, and growing operational engagement with the private financial sector.

This will include the expansion of our Anti-Money Laundering Rapid Response Protocol, after successful pilots in live operations.

At the backdrop of all these evolutions, our I-CORE modernization programme is also being pursued at full speed.

Our analytical, real-time biometric matching, and structured messaging capabilities are the first targets in our sight. I wish to thank Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden for their support and pledges to the programme.

I-CORE will make INTERPOL's architecture more flexible and responsive.

This aligns with the support that reached your agencies even closer to your frontlines, especially where your national borders have come under pressure - on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts; along the Balkan Route; and, soon, at the borders of Afghanistan.

Such diverse reach rests on our global, physical presence, which is evolving.

It will be strengthened at its core – where French authorities formally committed to fund the expansion of our Headquarters in Lyon – therefore ultimately freeing resources for operational activities, so far spent on renting facilities. A major step forward.

Our presence will also be expanded – where you identified gaps to be addressed. This is the case of our future Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa in Riyadh; and of our Liaison Office in the Caribbean in Barbados.

And it will be consolidated – with the shifting of operations from our Liaison Office in Bangkok to the IGCI in Singapore from 2022. I thank the Royal Thai police for its leadership and support, in hosting INTERPOL over the past three decades.

Indeed, it is essential for INTERPOL to be effective as a global actor in each of your regions – with their own operational and political realities.

Currently, two forces are at play across our membership.

First - a gravitational pull towards more intense regional policing, giving greater energy to our work.

Second - rising geopolitical tensions, pushing regional blocs further apart.

The risk of fragmentation of international policing, as we know it, is severe. Something we cannot afford, and will not accept.

INTERPOL was created to navigate police through such times.

This starts with our neutrality. The framework governing INTERPOL cannot be imposed by any single regional entity. It will always be set by this General Assembly.

This principle received strong endorsement last August.

A unanimous, final and binding ruling from the Tribunal constituted by the Permanent Court of Arbitration determined that disputes involving our Constitution are for the General Assembly to decide, as INTERPOL's supreme governing body.

Our neutrality is what allows INTERPOL to welcome all our regional partners at the drawing table, in designing a global policing architecture that makes sense.

This General Assembly adopted the mandate for our upcoming negotiations with the European Union. It saw the birth of our support to AFRIPOL and to the G5 Sahel, and it heard before of the operational successes of our engagement with ASEANAPOL and Ameripol.

Tomorrow, it will be called to approve our enhanced cooperation agreement with the Arab Interior Ministers' Council.

These efforts will continue to bring you even better support, and avoid duplication.

The same applies to our cooperation with non-police partners - built on strict respect of our respective mandates.

There will be no blurring of lines. INTERPOL is in charge of global law enforcement communication, and criminal information exchange. It is the sole interlocutor of your National Central Bureaus.

That mandate is what is asked of INTERPOL by top decision makers, across our membership.

Since our last General Assembly, we saw this again with Ministers of the G20, the G7, the Council of the European Union, and in the United Nations General Assembly, among others.

Yet our presence at those tables cannot be taken for granted. It rests on our reputation, as the international voice of police.

This starts with how our channels are used.

The power of any Red Notice is in the trust of our membership and of decision makers in it. Undermining that trust is undermining INTERPOL as a whole.

Our Constitution is clear. No trade-off exists between "*the widest possible mutual assistance*" by criminal police and "*the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*", or our neutrality.

Each of us has a duty and role in this.

The General Secretariat will enforce the rules, as defined by the General Assembly. Requests that do not fall within those boundaries do not belong at INTERPOL. They will be declined.

Repeating them won't change the outcome. It will just flood our systems, and damage legitimate information exchange.

As we gather today, tailored actions foreseen by our rules are being applied to several NCBs to ensure compliance.

We will work with the Executive Committee, and be determined in using such measures again - whenever the integrity of our systems is at peril. Once again: this is our collective responsibility.

This is how we keep the door open for the next piece of information that may save lives.

This is what your National Central Bureaus were designed for.

Why they will be ultimately responsible for the actions taken in the field. And why we count on your ministries to make known across your governments what INTERPOL is really about.

It is a delicate balance. One we must also rely on our governance and advisory bodies, and on the lively and rich discussions amongst us, to manage.

They play a key role in our standing on the global stage, too. And they must be strengthened, too.

Colleagues,

Later today, you will be called to approve a set of reforms to our legal texts, designed by the Working Group on Governance that you – the General Assembly - convened in 2018.

The main focus is on procedure and substance regarding the Executive Committee, and the adoption of a Code that sets clear rules regarding ethics, accountability and integrity by its members.

They have the full support of the General Secretariat. I thank the members of the Working Group – many present today – and its Chair, former INTERPOL President KHOO, for their dedication.

I also urge all delegations to be present for this vote, which is extremely timely.

Both the Executive Committee, and the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's files, will leave this session profoundly renewed.

I thank all outgoing members for their guidance across their terms, during unprecedented times.

I especially want to recognize President Kim Jong Yang for his role as Chair of the Executive Committee and of the General Assembly, for helping us walk often really uncharted and difficult territory.

To their successors goes my pledge as Secretary General: we will bring INTERPOL into the next century, in just two years, with your help and with your insights. We will defend the values of our Constitution, together.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, police comes together again. Finally.

In the unique and fascinating setting of Istanbul and the Bosphorous. Thanks to the huge efforts of our gracious Turkish hosts, who have made this event possible, despite the great challenges around us.

Yes, today we meet bearing some scars. After trying times.

Many among us mourned colleagues and friends, who paid the ultimate sacrifice. There were thousands of them, worldwide. Badges and uniforms that won't be worn again. Ever. Yet all of us witnessed incredible courage in the past two years. We saw officers of all nationalities, religion and race rise above and beyond the challenge.

It was, and it is, a privilege for INTERPOL to serve them. And it is an honor to have you with us today.

The view from where I stand is not new.

Flags, uniforms, nations. One next to another. One for another.

But it is even more breathtaking today, after what we have endured.

Thank you. Merci. Gracias. Shukran.