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Remarks

By

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**Combating Transnational Organized Crime and
Human Trafficking: Two Global Crises in Need of
Internationally Coordinated Law Enforcement Responses**

Good Afternoon. Thank you, Ambassador Aragona, INTERPOL President KHOO Boon Hui, and Secretary General Ron Noble. I would also like to thank our host country and the people of Italy and, more specifically, Rome, for their warm hospitality. And I would like to thank INTERPOL and the National Central Bureaus and delegations from around the world for organizing and attending this extraordinary event – celebrating our joint achievements, building upon our relationships, discussing issues critical to our domestic and global security, and developing a path forward for this organization of law enforcement officials united in our joint pursuit of justice. I had the privilege of addressing the 80th General Assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam . . . and it is again an honor to be here and to be asked to speak with the global law enforcement community.

During my tenure as Deputy Attorney General, I have come to learn firsthand the unprecedented level of international cooperation between INTERPOL member countries in developing the critical law enforcement tools of 24/7 communication, information sharing and coordinated responses. This works to deprive criminals of their transnational advantage. The unwavering dedication to mission by INTERPOL and the world's National Central Bureaus is both inspiring and critical to our joint successes in combating crime. Frankly, the broad array of issues you each deal with on a daily basis and on a global scale is simply astonishing.

The United States and its citizens have benefitted greatly from our robust partnership with INTERPOL and its member countries and allies. You all have played a significant role in adding a layer of security around our borders. For that, we are ever grateful – and we pledge to continue supporting the mission of INTERPOL and reciprocating your invaluable assistance and cooperation.

Last year, I spoke about cybercrime and cybersecurity and called upon more countries to ratify the Budapest Convention – built upon the same three tenets as INTERPOL: international collaboration, steadfast vigilance and continuous engagement. Since we last gathered, six countries have ratified the Convention: Austria, Belgium, Georgia, Japan, Malta and Switzerland. Thank you for your partnership in this endeavor and your steadfast commitment to the rule of law and the security of all of our nations. For those that have not yet acted – and I understand that there are at least nine countries that have expressed official interest (Argentina, Australia, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Korea, Mexico, the Philippines and Senegal) – I urge you all to take steps to ratify this powerful law enforcement tool.

Today, I would like to address two areas – sometimes intertwined – that would benefit greatly from INTERPOL's continued leadership and support and member countries' investment, vigilance and cooperation: Transnational Organized Crime and Human Trafficking.

Transnational organized crime poses a significant and growing threat to the security of each of our nations, our citizens, and the international community as a whole. Not only are criminal networks expanding, but they are also diversifying their activities – with dire implications for public safety, public health, democratic institutions and, in this already tough economic climate, the financial stability of nations across the globe. The United Nations estimates that, in 2009, transnational organized criminal activities generated \$870 *billion* in illegal proceeds – equivalent to almost 7% of world exports. Whatever form they take, these *borderless* criminal networks have common goals and methods of achieving of those goals: they seek power, influence and commercial gains – through a pattern of corruption, violence, threats and illicit financial transactions.

The United States is fully engaged in the fight against transnational organized crime. In January 2010, we completed a comprehensive review of this issue and identified five key threats that it poses to global security:

1. Threat To The Rule of Law: The penetration of governments by these criminal networks is subverting the rule of law, democratic institutions, and transparent business practices. Their growing reach and power is allowing them to establish strategic alliances with government leaders and intelligence services around the world, and threatens stability.
2. Threat To Global Financial Markets: These criminal networks are increasing their subversion of legitimate financial markets, threatening economic interests and raising the risk of significant damage to the world financial system.
3. Threat To Computer Systems Worldwide: These criminal networks are becoming increasingly involved in cybercrime, which costs consumers *billions* of dollars annually, creates risks to sensitive corporate and government computer networks, and undermines worldwide confidence in the international financial system.
4. Threat To Peace and Security: Terrorists and insurgents are increasingly turning to criminal networks to generate funding and acquire logistical support.
5. And the Threat To Public Health: Despite demonstrable counterdrug successes in recent years, illicit drugs remain a serious threat to the health, safety, security, and financial well-being of our nations' citizens, as well as a source of great wealth and operating capital for these criminal groups.

In response to this threat assessment, in July 2011, the United States launched a national Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime, which calls for a whole-of-government approach – capitalizing upon a coordinated effort and intelligence sharing by and between our domestic law enforcement partners and our Departments of Justice, State, Treasury, and Homeland Security. We realized that law enforcement measures alone would not fully counter the threat of transnational organized crime. Included in this approach was: the work of our Department of the Treasury to impose financial sanctions

on major transnational organized crime groups and individuals; and the work of our Department of State to deny entry to the United States to transnational criminal aliens and others who have been targeted for financial sanctions. As a direct result of these actions, five transnational organized crime groups that span the globe already have been subjected to these crippling financial sanctions.

Building on our successful counter-narcotics work, we have developed a Center to bring together nine federal law enforcement agencies to share data and intelligence – both domestically and internationally – on organized crime investigations. This innovation expands our abilities to spot patterns and coordinate investigations against transnational organized crime networks. It also aids our attempts to identify forfeitable assets associated with these criminal activities and obtain seizures and forfeitures of the proceeds of their crimes. And it hits these networks where it hurts the most – in their pocketbooks – depriving them of their ill-gotten gains and the resources they need to continue and expand their criminal activities.

A key component of our transnational organized crime strategy and resulting success has been, and will continue to be, forging successful and strategic partnerships with our friends and allies around the world. Through increased law enforcement cooperation and capacity building, and through the increased use of such legal instruments as the U.N. Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, we are forging alliances with partner nations against transnational organized crime Alliances that will become increasingly important as this problem continues to spread from country to country.

There is no easy or quick solution. But, like the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, the universal ratification and implementation of the U.N. Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime would be an important step in the right direction.

Our joint efforts are paying off. Historically, the United States has partnered with nations such as this year's host (Italy) and, coincidentally, next year's host (Colombia) to successfully take on powerful transnational organized groups. More recently, we have achieved great successes working with nations such as Mexico against major narcotics trafficking organizations and with Romania to crack down on organized cybercrime groups.

We have also found great partners in Hungary, Spain and the United Kingdom – and are actively seeking additional partners to further expand these efforts.

Transnational organized crime is not a problem that the United States, or any one country, can solve alone. We are pleased to see that other countries – such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand – have done assessments and published complementary strategies against transnational organized crime and other nations are considering and developing similar strategies. I encourage every country to perform similar assessments of the threats posed by transnational organized crime, and develop a strategy against those threats. The United States is eager to work with you in developing sophisticated investigative capabilities needed to fight these criminal groups. Tools such as wiretaps and undercover operations; the use of confidential informants; and legislation that criminalizes the activities practiced by these criminal networks such as money laundering, migrant smuggling and cybercrime are necessary if we are ever going to actually win this fight.

And gatherings such as this are vital places for countries to come together and resolve to join to respond effectively as criminals adopt new techniques or seek to conceal their crimes behind a veil of legitimacy and the protection of borders. I can pledge to you that the United States will be a strong and relentless partner in these vital efforts.

I want to speak as well about a particular kind of transnational organized crime – one that demands enhanced global attention and a unified law enforcement response: human trafficking. As stated by President Obama during his recent speech to the Clinton Global Initiative, human trafficking, simply put, is modern-day slavery. And like transnational organized crime, it can take many forms. It is the young woman who moves to another country for the promise of a new life – but instead finds herself enslaved and repeatedly sold for sex. Or it is the child who ran away from home and finds herself in the same situation because, in desperate need, she accepted help from the wrong person. Or it is the migrant worker who is deprived of identification, transportation and access to money in order to ensure his or her total dependence on his or her employer.

One of the greatest horrors of this crime is that traffickers view their victims as nothing more than a commodity, something that can be bought and sold, or simply taken . . . and eventually discarded. The treatment traffickers mete out to their victims is fully consistent with that; they are treated as property or things – not people. As has been so astutely pointed out: You can only sell a drug once, but you can sell a human being over, and over, and over leaving the victims in a perpetual life of bondage.

Although human trafficking may take many forms, it often has two common elements. First, it is hidden in plain sight – what may appear at first to be a prostitution offense, a domestic abuse incident, a physical or sexual assault, a labor dispute or an immigration crime, upon closer examination may turn out to be a case of human slavery. Second, victims are often traumatized and may be reluctant to cooperate with authorities – either fearing their captors or not trusting law enforcement or both. This is especially true when a trafficking victim is not legally in the country or is forced to commit crimes to survive. Because of this, we have learned over time that increasing awareness by first responders of factors that may indicate a potential human trafficking offense is critical to increasing our ability to identify and help human trafficking victims.

The United States is fully engaged in combating human trafficking. The Attorney General and I – and indeed all of us at the Department of Justice – are fully committed to preventing and fighting human trafficking in all its forms. And our efforts in this area continue to increase. Last year, the Department set a new record in the number of defendants charged in human trafficking cases, and over the last three years, there has been a 30% increase in the number of forced labor and human trafficking cases charged. But, as with so many other law enforcement initiatives, the United States has not – and cannot – eradicate this horrific crime alone. It is frequently an international crime and we necessarily rely heavily upon our law enforcement partners from around the globe *as well as* our colleagues in governmental and non-governmental organizations that are focused on helping human trafficking victims recover from the devastating harms they have suffered.

An essential element in bringing successful human trafficking prosecutions has been this broad array of partnerships. These partnerships increase the effectiveness of our joint efforts, and yield concrete results.

After attending the 80th General Assembly in Vietnam, I had the honor of visiting the Philippines and addressing the graduates of a course on Human Trafficking at the Philippine National Police Headquarters. The course was conducted by American and Philippine police instructors through the Justice Department's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program. Graduates of this course are now key players on the front lines of the fight against human trafficking.

United States and Mexican law enforcement authorities are working together to dismantle sex trafficking networks operating on both sides of our joint border. Our collaborative efforts have brought freedom to victims and secured landmark convictions and substantial sentences against the traffickers in a number of high impact bilateral cases.

In July 2012, a Ukrainian national was sentenced to life in prison plus 20 years, and his brother was sentenced to 20 years in prison, for their roles in a family-run human trafficking organization which smuggled young Ukrainian immigrants into the United States over a seven year period and forced them to work on cleaning crews for no pay. The defendants used threats, physical and sexual assault, and debt bondage to keep the victims in involuntary servitude. The defendants also threatened violence to the families of the victims who still resided in the Ukraine and repeatedly and brutally raped at least two female workers. INTERPOL played a key role in this successful prosecution and we thank our partners in Germany for arresting and extraditing one of the defendants to stand trial and be confronted by his victims.

These efforts – which highlight the value of engaging in global partnerships to combat human trafficking – send an important message: we will relentlessly pursue those who trade in the misery of other human beings and we will rescue their victims and bring the perpetrators to justice.

At the same time, we must understand that criminal prosecution alone is not the answer. It simply cannot undo the years of physical and emotional abuse and torment to the victims and their families and the permanent scars left behind. That is why we must do everything we can to focus on prevention: prevention through the dismantling of trafficking rings before they can ensnare other victims; prevention through deterrence so that our prosecutions and significant sentences dissuade others who may consider engaging in this crime; prevention through public awareness so these organizations have less room to operate; and, lastly, prevention through the education of potential victims who, driven by fear, poverty, or lack of education, often unwittingly place their lives in the hands of exploitative traffickers.

It truly is hard to believe that it has been 150 years since President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation – freeing slaves in the United States – and more than 60 years since the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights prohibited the practice of slavery on a global scale. Yet, in communities in the United States and around the world, human trafficking still exists. In fact, according to the United Nations, there are *27 million* people worldwide who currently toil in bondage – more than at any time in human history. The crimes against them are not a single episode, but a repeated violation of their rights and their dignity. While we have made great strides in attacking the problem, there is still so much yet to be done. These victims depend on us for their rescue. We must not let them down.

No country or law enforcement agency has the ability or perspective necessary to fully assess the nature of the crimes and criminal enterprises we face or to adequately address them all. Only by communicating effectively, sharing intelligence and combining resources – within our own governments and with our law enforcement partners and allies – can we truly understand current and emerging trends and create an effective strategy to anticipate and combat these crimes. Transnational organized crime and human trafficking present extraordinary challenges for all of us. But, by working together across borders and continents, we can turn the tables on these criminals and the complex and ever evolving threats that they present. And by attending conferences like this, we build the personal contacts and relationships that are so vital to getting this goal done.

Thank you all again for attending this extraordinary event and for all that you and your nations have done, and will continue to do, to support INTERPOL's mission and the mission of cooperative law enforcement around the world.