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Remarks

by

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INTERPOL Global Academic Experts Meeting for Integrity in Sports

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Secretary General of INTERPOL, Mr Ronald K. Noble,

Distinguished Experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to join you at this INTERPOL Global Academic Experts meeting for Integrity in Sport. I wish to extend a very warm welcome to our foreign friends who have come together from both near and far to attend this important meeting.

At the INTERPOL Ministerial Meeting in Rome earlier this month, I spoke of an evolving security landscape where global connectivity is being exploited to perpetuate transnational crimes. I emphasized the need for concerted effort from all stakeholders to address the security challenges collectively in order to be effective. In short, international collaboration is imperative.

Today's global expert meeting for Integrity in Sport is an excellent example of concerted effort against the evolving transnational security threat of corruption and fraud in the sports industry. It is heartening to see a congregation of bright minds and academia from all over the world to discuss strategies to combat match-fixing and corruption in sports.

The sporting industry today has evolved into an influential and multi-billion dollar business. While the influx of investment and capital brings about positive effects such as the promotion of sports and better sporting facilities, it also entices crime syndicates to perpetuate their evil deeds through fraud and corruption.

Today, the rapid advance of technology has increased the potential for fraud and corruption in the global betting market. Another key development has been the rapid growth of Internet betting – it has increased the liquidity of sports wagering markets, making them more competitive, promoting the growth of new modes of betting and in-play betting. These developments increase the opportunities for athletes and officials to participate in 'fixing'. 'Fixing' does not simply refer to the manipulation of the final outcome, but also the manipulation of any aspect of the play.

Even more alarming is the intricate relationship between sports and transnational organized crime. This is apparent in football. In 2009, The Financial Action Task Force identified football to

be one of the sports that is most vulnerable to the influence of money. Commercialization of the sport; large monetary transactions; cross border money flows; betting; and long term returns for an investor provides the necessary platform for the infiltration of money laundering activities into the football sector.

Apart from commercialization, the high level of participation in sports worldwide has also empowered the sporting industry, giving it strong influence over culture, youth, social life and identity. If sporting fraud and corruption are left unchecked, the ramifications on our society will be far reaching with dire consequences.

Singapore takes a serious view of sports fraud and corruption and has imposed stiff penalties for corruption offences.

Like in other countries, Singapore has seen breaches in sport integrity. We have had cases of individuals who have been convicted or associated with match fixing. However, Singapore's zero-tolerance approach towards corruption and match-fixing has ensured that these individuals were dealt with firmly and resolutely by the law.

As corruption in sports and match fixing is a global phenomenon, the response must be global, holistic and proactive. The response must involve different stakeholders at the national and international level. The different stakeholders include policy makers; public officials; sports leaders; NGOs and also our citizens. Developing a strong and united front with our partners and other stakeholders is critical to our successful efforts against transnational crime.

A notable example of such partnerships will be that between INTERPOL and FIFA. FIFA's historic contribution to establish a dedicated FIFA Anti-Corruption Training Wing within the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation aims to provide cutting-edge training, education and prevention to protect the sport, players and fans from fraud and corruption. This partnership sends a strong signal of the global efforts in place to fight against sport corruption.

You can be assured of Singapore's robust support for sport integrity and other anti-corruption initiatives. The Singapore Police Force has actively participated in international operations, such as the INTERPOL-coordinated operation, codenamed Operation SOGA IV. Police across China (including Hong Kong and Macau), Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam joined hands in the two-month long operation to combat illegal soccer gambling in Asia linked to organized crime gangs. The operation covered the final matches of major national football leagues across Europe, the UEFA championships and EURO 2012. It consisted of over 200 raids on illegal gambling dens which were estimated to have handled over USD 85 million worth of bets.

In the global fight against fraud and corruption in sports, I am also heartened by INTERPOL's strategic foresight to rope in the bright minds of academia to provide thought leadership on this evolving threat.

I firmly believe in the close collaboration and partnership between academics and the public sector. Academia shapes our existing knowledge through research. The research can add depth and dimension to the policing solutions available to us. Academia can also play an important role by developing and implementing training modules and academic courses, to increase understanding of match-fixing and other forms of sports corruption.

A successful partnership that I have witnessed in Singapore is the collaboration between the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore; and the Corrupt Practice Investigation Bureau of Singapore. An Executive Programme was designed for directors, senior officers and civil servants from the anti-corruption bureaus in their countries. This was also extended to professionals in the private sector that partners the government to combat corruption. The programme sets out to examine major types of corruption and international trends surrounding them. Participants will be equipped to diagnose corruption risks and build strong capacities across governance systems, to prevent corruption and to mobilize an effective operational and enforcement response within an integrated policy framework.

I am certain such collaboration between academia and the public sector can be replicated in the area of sport integrity to bring excellent results.

Sports have always been about the triumph of the human spirit and celebrating humanity. Sports capture the attention and imagination of millions around the world. Through sports, we learn about victory, defeat, sportsmanship, teamwork, integrity and trust. Moving forward, let us work together to keep sports clean, enjoyable and rewarding. More importantly, doing so will protect the very fabric of our society by curbing the spread of transnational and organized crime.

I look forward to the exchange of useful ideas during this meeting. To close, please join me in applauding INTERPOL for its resilient endeavour to promote international policing to make the world a safer place.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion. Thank you very much.