

MEETING OF HEADS OF NATIONAL CENTRAL BUREAUS

Mr Palmer (Australia) was elected to chair the meeting.

Reports on the activities of the working parties set up by the General Assembly

The Director of Liaison and Criminal Intelligence reported on the activities of the working parties set up by the General Assembly.

Working Party on Bank/Police Co-operation

The Director began with a brief overview of the work carried out by the Working Party on Bank/Police Co-operation, which had been set up at the 55th General Assembly session. The Working Party's primary aims were to continue to work towards improved co-operation with the banking industry in order to find practical ways to combat banking fraud.

Working Party on Environmental Crime

Since its creation in 1993, the Working Party had held three meetings, and in September 1996 an International Conference on Environmental Crime had taken place in Lyons. Due to the success of that Conference, another one was planned for 13th and 14th November 1997.

The Working Party was divided into four sub-groups. The first sub-group dealt with the transborder movement and dumping of hazardous waste. The second sub-group focused on the trafficking of real or purported radioactive substances. The third sub-group was

responsible for dealing with the protection of endangered species and wild flora and fauna. Finally, the fourth sub-group had the responsibility of co-ordinating the activities of the other three sub-groups.

One of the sub-groups' significant achievements was the development of the ECO message, which facilitated the rapid exchange of information in that field. The sub-group also reviewed the practical guide on co-operation between Interpol and CITES.

The General Secretariat had also conducted two analytical studies in relation to environmental crime, namely Project Nuclear and Project Noah. A study was currently ongoing regarding the possibility of setting up a joint database for Interpol, CITES and the World Customs Organization.

Standing Working Party on Offences against Minors

Mr Higdon outlined the origins of the Standing Working Party and its work over the years. He spoke of the current activities of sub-groups formed by the Standing Working Party, the appointment of Contact Officers within the member countries, training seminars for Contact Officers, and the various meetings held jointly with ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) and UNICEF. He referred in particular to the more recent meeting held in Buenos Aires, the purpose of which had been to increase awareness in the South American countries of offences against children. At the instigation of Argentina, a Regional Committee had been set up in South America to allow law enforcement within the region to

discuss such issues. Brazil, Chile and Colombia were particularly active in promoting those concerns.

Interpol was in the process of publishing a handbook which would be a practical guide to be used by police officers dealing with offences against children. Interpol's work through the Standing Working Party had gained recognition on the worldwide scene for its achievements and professionalism in that important area of criminality. Interpol would continue its work in this area as mandated by the General Assembly at its 65th session held in Antalya, Turkey.

The Delegates of Bangladesh, Colombia, Sri Lanka, India, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Hungary, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Canada and South Africa reported on the situation in their respective countries and the legislation and means adopted to combat offences against minors.

The Chairman summarized the various statements made by the delegates and reiterated the remarks made by the Delegate of Bangladesh, who had provided interesting statistics. He thanked Sri Lanka for the efficient co-operation which had taken place with some European countries. He added that he was pleased and encouraged to see that countries were treating this issue very seriously and were taking appropriate measures in their national legislation to combat this type of criminality, as in the example given by the United Kingdom. In closing his remarks the Chairman congratulated the Standing Working Party on Offences against Minors on a job well done.