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OPENING REMARKS

by

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Your Excellency, Prime Minister of Curaçao, Mr Ivar Asjes,
Attorney General of Puerto Rico, Mr Luis Sanchez Betances,
Ms Mireille Ballestrazzi, President of INTERPOL,
Mr Ronald K. Noble, Secretary General of INTERPOL,
Members of the Executive Committee,
Heads of National Police Forces,
Heads of National Central Bureaus,
Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to all of you, muy buenos dias a todos.

Today is a very important day for Curaçao for several reasons.

It is the first time we are having such an important INTERPOL conference in our country.

Secondly, today we are celebrating the 150th year of the abolishment of slavery in Curaçao.

And also very important: tomorrow, 2 July, will be our official flag and national anthem day.

It is a privilege for me to be addressing such a selected group of professionals, who every day dedicate their lives to maintaining our beautiful earth as a safe place for us to live upon.

On behalf of the government of Curaçao, I wish to thank all the member countries of INTERPOL who two years ago during the celebration of the 21st INTERPOL Americas Regional Conference unanimously has chose Curaçao as the venue for this conference.

I hereby also wish to thank the former Minister of Justice Mr Elmer Wilsoe, who is present here today among us; it was he who took the initiative to have this conference taking place in Curaçao today.

The Government of Curaçao recognizes the importance of having the International Criminal Police Organization as a strategic partner in its fight against transnational crimes.

Since Curaçao became a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 10 October 2010 after the Netherlands Antilles was dismantled, we are intensively in the process of fortifying our working relationships with regional and international partners in order to prevent and combat those crimes that are being committed in our country and that could pose an immediate threat to the public order and safety which could also harm our economy.

In Curaçao, we have been experiencing for more than a decade the alarming use of firearms in criminal cases. We must do our utmost to put a stop to this phenomenon, which is forming an immediate threat to the public safety in Curaçao.

I hope that with the use of the INTERPOL tools such as the new firearms database and the joint law enforcement operations that this organization is launching in the Caribbean region, we will be able to stop, or at least limit, these firearms from entering our country.

In accordance with my policy vision, and also in close cooperation with all the Justice Ministers of the Dutch Kingdom, we are coordinating the cooperation in matters of justice and investigation in order to be able to conclude this successfully.

The interchange of knowledge is very important, because we must not forget that today's international criminals are also making use of the best techniques that are available on the market.

It's also very difficult for small countries to cope with the costs involved in the fight against international crime, so cooperation between the Justice Ministers within the Dutch Kingdom, and also cooperation with INTERPOL on a structural basis, is essential.

This cooperation can cover areas like the police organizations, the penitentiary institutions and the coast guard and more. We must stop, or at least limit, the entering of drugs, weapons and the illegal traffic of people.

I was informed that during the first official visit of the Secretary General of INTERPOL to Curaçao in July 2011, the government committed themselves to initiate the process of having the I-24/7 databases extended to national law enforcement in Curaçao, and also to install the FIND system so that we can protect our borders against those who intend to enter our country with the use of a lost or stolen travel document.

I can announce today in front of this audience that I-24/7 has been extended to the Curaçao police force last week. The testing of the system is taking place at this moment that I am speaking.

Due to some technical configuration that still need to take place, the FIND system will be implemented in the coming weeks.

The Head of NCB of Curaçao also informed me that the customs and the Coast Guard will soon be connected to I-24/7.

Looking at the agenda I see that a lot of important topics will be discussed and dealt with during these three days. I hope that all the information provided by the speakers and discussions held will lead to a successful conference and that all your expectations will be met.

As a proud native of Curaçao I would also recommend all of you to make good use of the opportunities you may get to see and enjoy our beautiful island.

A todos los huéspedes de habla español quiero expresar también mis palabras de calorosa bienvenidas en la isla de Curazao i que ustedes todos tienen una conferencia muy exitosa.

Thank you very much for your attention, and I wish you all a very successful conference.