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## OPENING ADDRESS

BY

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# 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HEADS OF NCB CONFERENCE

2 APRIL 2014

CENTRE DE CONGRES | LYON, FRANCE

Madame La Presidente, Mrs Mireille BALLESTRAZZI;

Distinguished Chiefs of Police;

INTERPOL Executive Committee member for Europe, Mr Filippo DISPENZA;

Executive Director for Police Services, Mr Jean-Michel LOUBOUTIN;

Dear Heads of INTERPOL National Central Bureaus;

Dear Representatives from Partnering Organizations,

Dear Senior Staff and all Colleagues from INTERPOL General Secretariat, Regional Bureaus and Liaison Offices and member countries worldwide,

Dear guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bonjour, Good Morning, Buenos Dias, As-Salaam Alekoum.

When the sun dawns upon our beloved planet every morning, each one of us has some expectations from the day to come. We may have some hopes anew, some joys to share, or some decisions to take.

Decisions ranging from those that affect our immediate surroundings to those that could shape global history. Decisions to take care of our loved ones in the best possible way and professional decisions in the course of our working lives.

One fine day in July of the year 1999, 15 years ago, the INTERPOL Executive Committee took a decision: of selecting right here in Lyon a new candidate for the post of Secretary General – who was elected the following year by our General Assembly in Rhodes, Greece.

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The voice you hear at this moment, right here, right now – belongs to the person they chose, and to the one who has had the privilege, the honour and the absolute pleasure to serve you as INTERPOL's Secretary General for all these years.

And as the sun rose this morning, and I was thinking about going running once again – I was reminded of what an honour it would be yet again today, to address this Annual Heads of National Central Bureaus Conference. What makes it even more special for me is that this gathering is now a statutory meeting...*and* that this will most likely be the last time I open this annual Heads of NCBs as your Secretary General.

So it is a time of reflection for me.

The world as I saw it, at the age of 43 in the year 1999, when I was selected by the Executive Committee, felt and looked quite different from the one I see today.

Closer to my home, amongst many other differences, two towers had then stood rising high in New York City where I was a Professor of Law at the New York University School of Law. One would have never imagined New York City without the Twin Towers.

In 1999, most people still preferred to use the spoken word to communicate with one another, rather than writing.

In fact, back then the Internet had less than 10% of the globe's population accessing it. By 2013, this figure would reach almost at 40% with more than 2.7 Billion people having access to the world's virtual space.

Looking back, there was limited exchange of ideas and efforts between law enforcement and other sectors of society. By now, resources of the private and public sectors are increasingly pooled together through many methods and means to jointly address issues.

INTERPOL as an organization was quite different too: we did not provide a 24/7 operational support for the police forces of the world to rely on. Many regions had no representation at INTERPOL's most senior management level, and the workforce included employees from only about 50 countries (54).

The role of our NCBs too, I am sure you would all agree, has since become much more demanding and dynamic than before.

It is because forces or drivers in this changed – and ever-changing – world, have implications for which law enforcement in our member countries needs to adapt itself. And so does INTERPOL. Sometimes, every hour, every minute.

But evolution is a part of everything mankind creates and witnesses.

It is no surprise therefore, that INTERPOL now works around the clock; and serves 190 member countries through 7 regional and 2 representative offices spread over 5 continents.

Neither is it any surprise that the use of information technology by the organization has seen a fundamentally superior transformation over time.

The Organization had planned to replace old X-400 system used since 1992 with a closed non-Internet based system called Atlas.

But, the influence of my young students at NYU over me on the issue of technology was great. Let me quote from an interview I had given back in 1999: "If INTERPOL doesn't adopt a state of the art, web-based system to communicate with local police, Interpol will die out." When the private sector company selected to build the Atlas project missed its first deadline, I cancelled the contract.

I then assembled a team of creative and innovative colleagues here at the General Secretariat and asked them to invent an Internet-based communication system that would link us to you, our NCBs, and you to one another. I gave no other guidance.

In 2002, they created a secure Internet-based global communications system that we call I-24/7. Canada would be the first country connected in 2003. Eventually, every single one of your countries would be connected as we are today. With I-24/7 a new era was begun.

But, we didn't stop there. Today our colleagues in IS have created the 'INTERPOL Secure Cloud' which will provide you and the Organization with extraordinary benefits.

The Cloud is an intrinsic part of the future as we see it, designed with a high measure of flexibility: allowing it to be scaled as per *your* changing needs.

It has been *innovated* for law enforcement in the coming decades – to save, use and share information securely through the channels of INTERPOL.

Innovation has always been, as I have often stated, in the DNA of the organization.

This is why, in exactly 181 days, a structure will come to life in Singapore. 30 September 2014 will witness the opening of the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation (IGCI) to focus on cybercrime and capacity building and training.

IGCI will also embrace another Command and Coordination Center, or 'CCC': promising to provide operational support in real time from a third time zone.

Much has in fact transpired in the daily lives of INTERPOL's talented workforce at the General Secretariat offices in Lyon and around the world. The CCC at Lyon, some time back in December 2013, celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its creation, since the time that has not seen 'the lights ever go out' at INTERPOL.

And through this time, I have felt the joy of being a part of a remarkable family of people, which presently consists of 776 people representing more than 100 nationalities (104).

We had a very powerful staff meeting two days ago that reminded me just how fortunate I am to be INTERPOL Secretary General. My staff were open and candid about what they saw in my leadership that was strong and positive; and also about what they saw as areas where the Organization needed to improve and change. They were confident that their voices would be heard and that action would be taken.

I do not say thank you enough to my staff and I do not always do it in the right way. So, let me ask you, our Heads of NCB, to please stand and join me in thanking my staff in Lyon and around the world – for their dedication to INTERPOL.

The truth is that police officers around the world who arrest a fugitive or save potential victims from harm might never know the faces behind the support that their country's NCB received – whether that support came from INTERPOL staff at the General Secretariat or from you, our NCBs.

But thanks to the true spirit of international law enforcement cooperation, and to INTERPOL, together we have been able to accomplish many milestones.

Across borders.

Just before the year 2005 began, the destruction caused by one single natural calamity required the collective technology, skill, expertise, personal sacrifice and knowledge that we could possibly muster – to be deployed.

Immediately.

It was 26 December 2004: the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean had hit the shores of many countries in Asia. Soon after, an emergency international meeting was convened by INTERPOL, which saw participation by 26 countries. INTERPOL was to engage in the single biggest operational response in the history of the organization.

As a result, Disaster Victim Identification teams from many member countries and Incident Response Teams (IRTs) embracing General Secretariat staff were deployed across four affected member countries to assist with Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) efforts. It was a very difficult time for many of our member countries, their citizens and their families.

Together, we assisted national authorities and international teams over the following year in identifying almost 3,000 victims of the disaster in one country (Thailand).

Public belief and support in the work of international law enforcement has been a major motivating factor to pursue our vision of a safer world. At times, it has even provided invaluable investigative help to catch criminals.

When in 2007, INTERPOL made a global public appeal to seek help in identifying a suspected child abuser – the ensuing response and investigation led directly to his being located, identified and arrested half way around the world. It was strikingly remarkable.

The case of his sexual abuse of children in Asia had been worked on by our member countries and colleagues from the General Secretariat for years. Germany's BKA helped us unswirl his disguised facial image to make identification easier. When all else failed we decided to launch our first global appeal seeking the public's help to put a name and identity to his face.

Within a day of our global public appeal, enough information was received from sources in Europe, Asia and the Americas: to identify the suspect as Christopher Paul Neil – a Canadian working as a teacher in South Korea.

Thanks to the help of INTERPOL NCBs, the Royal Thai Police and Thai immigration, his movement was monitored and he was photographed by Thai immigration when he entered Thailand. Under this INTERPOL operation codenamed VICO, he was arrested in Thailand within two weeks and was eventually convicted of having sexually abused two Thai boys and sentenced to prison.

That is the power of INTERPOL: our NCBs, our expert groups, and our staff here and around the world...at the centre of our work are our NCBs.

Since I first became familiar with the work of INTERPOL, I have believed that the work of “the NCBs provides the lifeblood” of the organization. And the NCBs recognize the invaluable support that you receive from INTERPOL and your fellow countries.

In March 2008, it was with this faith that Colombian law enforcement authorities requested INTERPOL’s assistance on something unique.

Computers belonging to terrorists from FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) had been seized, and a neutral and independent international entity was needed to verify that the files contained therein had not been tampered with. This required specialist skill on one hand to deal with computer forensics, while needing work to be undertaken with intense media and public scrutiny at every step.

We did not have the expertise at INTERPOL HQ so we asked the Australian Federal Police and Singapore Police Force to help us with two of their best computer forensic experts.

The time was short and the margin for error: zero.

Under an initiative titled *Compfor*, on 15 May 2008, “INTERPOL’s Forensic Report on FARC Computers and Hardware Seized by Colombia” was released. The files were verified as not having been tampered with. Over 600 gigabytes of data was ready for being used for investigative purposes – and it was.

In the interim, an IRT had been deployed successfully in Colombia; sensitive material transported from South America to Asia to Europe, and back to South America with close monitoring and coordination by our Command and Coordination Centre.

As always, the staff of INTERPOL, and affected police and NCBs had risen to the occasion. All of those involved wouldn’t know exactly how big an impact we possibly made in eventually deterring terror from striking at that time.

September 11, 2001.

Memories were perhaps as fresh then as they are now. The link between terrorists and fraudulent ID documents was readily apparent.

Soon after, the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database was created in 2002.

In its first year, only 8 member countries contributed with less than 4000 records to the SLTD database, and it was searched only 21 times.

About 12 years later, as of today, corresponding figures stand as follows:

- 167 contributing countries;
- over 40 million records;
- checked more than 800 million times last year;
- nearly 68,000 hits generated.

This journey has not been easy. There are still far too many countries that do not systematically consult our stolen and lost travel documents database prior to letting persons cross their borders. There are even some countries that do not see the value of I-Checkit to fill the gaps created by their countries' failure to consult SLTD.

I remain as convinced as I was back in 2002, that one day all countries will systematically consult SLTD because their citizens will demand it... that their Heads of State will make sure that it happens, once they are made aware of what is possible and what their countries are not doing.

Why?

Madame La Presidente has already mentioned the ill-fated flight MH 370 that had gone missing recently. On behalf of INTERPOL, let me join the President in extending our deepest sympathies to the family members and loved ones of those gone missing.

From the time the incident was reported, INTERPOL's Command and Coordination Centre has had a dedicated team work around the clock.

As was to be confirmed subsequently, two persons boarded the flight with stolen passports. Fortunately, both these passports had been entered into the INTERPOL SLTD database by Italy and Austria, respectively. Unfortunately, SLTD had not been consulted.

INTERPOL has been offering help to check identities of all on board, to coordinate information exchange with all supporting NCBs, and even to collect ante mortem data for any disaster victim identification needs. We remain on standby even as I speak.

While we extend the opportunity to screen travel documents through the I-Checkit initiative to airlines, banks and hotels, there are clearly also some great challenges for the future.

Challenges for INTERPOL in the world as I see it today, 14 years after I became the Secretary General of INTERPOL.

Today, INTERPOL has greater attention from the media and the public than ever before. Our Turn Back Crime initiative will generate even more public attention.

While public attention brings a deeper sense of understanding and support for our work – the limelight will also be on both the organization's strengths, and its weaknesses.

We need to ensure at all times, that we remain apolitical and that the neutrality and independence of our organization are not compromised. Ever.

We need to maintain the highest quality of data in our databases and we need to be able to respond to one another's demands and needs 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our work has expanded dramatically, and we now engage in newer territories and domains. We need this to continue.

Our breadth of support ranges from IRTs deployed in Togo, Uganda and Sri Lanka to assist with wildlife crime investigations; to INTERPOL being looked upon by world leaders in combating nuclear terrorism, while I was at the Nuclear Security Summit last week. From providing training and capacity building programmes in post-conflict environments, to analysing and sharing intelligence on “foreign fighters”.

And we are not alone. Our partnerships have increased exponentially: in 2000, the active Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed by INTERPOL were only 11.

Today, this figure stands at 63. In addition are the numerous external funding donors, operational and project based partners.

INTERPOL’s relationship with other international and regional organizations will also have to be nourished in a mutually beneficial manner, avoiding duplication of efforts or resources.

Meanwhile, we are also presented with increasing challenges for organizational management of an expanding work force, while needing faster and smoother coordination between our offices and INTERPOL NCBs around the globe.

Keeping our eyes and ears close to ground realities has been something I have consistently believed in, while visiting 179 of our member countries to understand better what goes on at the frontlines of law enforcement.

And reaching the same frontlines to provide assistance when – and *where* – needed, is a top priority for INTERPOL’s personnel. Which is why the value, importance and necessity of the INTERPOL Travel Document in the years to come, is bound to only increase.

I am pleased to share that as on date, 67 member countries recognize the ITD, while during this very conference, four more countries have confirmed that they will officially recognize it. Yet another 107 countries are currently considering recognition.

In the global fight against crime, actions need to be sustained effectively, and consistently, with resources. The economic state of our member countries must not alone be allowed to determine the preparedness and response capacity of international law enforcement. Especially in a world where the concerned stakeholders are many, cutting across borders, and even public and private sectors.

In this school of thought lay the origin of the ‘INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World.’

The INTERPOL Foundation is fortunate to have been created under the leadership of its First President, His Excellency Mr Elias MURR, former Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of Defense of Lebanon. We are grateful for the sacrifice of personal time he has voluntarily decided to make, and the risk faces: in undertaking this responsibility to keep the global fight against crime going strong.

Equally grateful are we to Judge Louis J. FREEH, who has agreed to guide the INTERPOL Foundation in crafting a due diligence and good governance framework. Judge FREEH, a former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), United States – is a partner and chair of the Executive Committee of Pepper Hamilton LLP; and has globally recognized expertise in the fields of effective governance, compliance, due diligence and anti-corruption.



Before I conclude, I must mention that I have had the enriching experience of closely working with INTERPOL's Executive Committee, which has been led by three different Presidents earlier, and since 2012, Madame Mireille BALLESTRAZZI, INTERPOL's first woman President and a long standing supporter of the organization.

INTERPOL is also extremely fortunate to have had decisive and bold Executive Committees, whose members have never shied away from newer challenges.

And while challenges have been accepted, the determination to pursue our vision of a safer world, has only grown stronger.

A determination that requires all the houses of the international law enforcement community to be in order. It especially requires resilience on the part of INTERPOL NCBs: to always be ready.

To be ready when the time comes. To be ready wherever the world needs us.

Once again, I feel honoured and privileged to be your Secretary General and to see the Organization formally recognize the importance of you, our NCB's, by making this a statutory meeting.

Since this will most likely be my last Heads of NCB meeting, let me give you an image of how I have seen and continue to see my work as your Secretary General in the months ahead until I conclude my time here with you.

I will draw on my African roots to do so.

I was once asked: "Which animal do you feel most like as SG?" My response: "Some days I feel like a lion and some days I feel like a gazelle." The person looked puzzled and asked me to explain.

There is an African proverb that applies to me, and I believe should apply to anyone affiliated with INTERPOL.

*"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed and eaten.*

*Every morning in Africa a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the gazelle or it will starve to death."*

*The point of the story:*

*"It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle: when the sun comes up, you'd better be running."*

My dear colleagues, you can rest assured that, between now and the time I leave you, this lion or gazelle will wake up each and every morning, running on your behalf.

Thank you very much.