Global Summit to Tackle Online Child Sexual Exploitation "A Way Forward for Stronger International Cooperation"

The Rt Hon Theresa May, Home Secretary,

Mr Keith Bristow, Director General of the National Crime Agency,

Ms Maud DE BOER-BUQUICCHIO, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography,

Distinguished Ministers of Interior, Justice and Home Affairs,

Honorable Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is perhaps an intriguing point of departure to mention that my interest in international police cooperation, and motivation behind becoming INTERPOL Secretary General, in fact originated a decade ago from a storage locker.

It was in this locker that German police discovered a series of child abuse images where the face of the offender had been digitally altered by a "swirl".

Although it took a few years, the *Bundeskriminalamt* was able to reverse the "swirl", and share a clear visual of the offender.

Having exhausted all investigative leads available across the membership of INTERPOL to identify him, a global public appeal was then launched in what became known as Operation VICO.

In the following days, participation by ten countries and civil society, led to his identification, apprehension in Thailand, and conviction.

As my staff at the *Bundeskriminalamt* worked the investigation and operation, this gave me a first-hand opportunity to view the key role international cooperation played, and the gravity of the problem that has brought us here today.

International cooperation stops offenders who abuse children and share materials online. It saves victims who suffer at the hands of these acts and the materials produced from them.

INTERPOL has witnessed this time and again.

It was, in fact, not long before VICO that you could use a major search engine to find child abuse material, or even websites where you could pay for it.

This material was out in the open, available to anyone, and this was unacceptable to us.

So, we responded collectively on a global scale, with the requisite political will, and buy-in from key stakeholders - law enforcement, industry, NGOs, hotlines and civil society.

This enabled us to remove it from the World Wide Web, but not completely from the Internet, and definitely not from the world we strive to protect.

Instead, it was displaced to other parts of the Internet including Peer-to-Peer networks, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and the Darknet.

We adapted and developed the tools to fight it; the expertise, and global network grew; but we haven't had the same success as in the past.

This means we have more to do, and we should not be discouraged.

We need a roadmap to guide the way forward, and one landmark in this roadmap must be stronger cooperation across borders and sectors.

For this to work, child abuse material is something that should not be guarded. This material can be found online with little difficulty, and once it's there, it's there forever.

Sharing it openly and globally among qualified experts, however, increases the odds that victims are identified; that offenders are tracked down, and that the material is removed.

In 2002, INTERPOL launched the International Child Sexual Exploitation Database, or ICSE, as a means to achieve this goal. The database currently connects law enforcement experts in 45 countries, as well as Europol.

In a very practical sense, ICSE ensures an expert in one country is not working a case or analyzing materials where a child has already been identified somewhere else in the world.

If an expert is investigating one set of materials, ICSE also gives them the opportunity to find more materials depicting the same victim shared by other experts.

In other words, ICSE ensures that resources, which we know too well are often stretched, are put to their optimal use.

Every image and video matters, every hash set matters, every set of eyes matters.

In the past, child sexual exploitation victims have been identified across the world through basic, but vital clues: the brand of a mattress, plugs and sockets, a dead camera pixel, or Miffy the Rabbit, a character in a famous Dutch children's book.

However, this would have never happened if the country that found the materials had simply kept them, and if its experts had been the only ones looking at them.

For instance, it took nine countries and INTERPOL to ultimately identify a 10-year old victim who was featured in a series of images known as GB-CHEERLEADER, initially discovered by Germany in 2010.

It was, in part, the type of school skirt she was wearing that led the investigation to Liverpool two years later, where the victim was rescued from a situation of ongoing abuse.

These cases are why law enforcement experts who use the ICSE believe in ICSE, and why their confidence in it has allowed it to grow.

When ICSE was first started, on average, <u>less than one</u> victim a day was identified through the material shared over it. At the start of this decade, this number had doubled. Today, in 2014, <u>five</u> victims are identified every day.

In short, ICSE works, and while what have achieved together is a lot, it is simply not enough.

ICSE is only as strong as the number of countries and users connected to it, and the amount of material shared through it.

In order to become stronger, national focal points are needed globally to centralize the collection of material; national databases are then needed to systematically feed ICSE, which in turn will feed other national databases.

Just looking within the UK - the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP), and the soon-to-be launched Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) - are model examples of a fundamental national structure needed locally, for a coherent global response by our global community.

As the capacity of countries grows stronger, INTERPOL is making ICSE better through the addition of chat and social networking facilities, and the development of video functionality.

Next year, we will launch a new version that is tailored to the needs of experts and will reduce the amount of labor dedicated to the identification process, using technologies from leaders in industry.

Automated video-to-video, and video-to-image search and analysis capabilities will facilitate the matching of visually-similar materials through linking automatically the unique characteristics, objects, and points of reference featured in them.

Sensor pattern detection will offer an additional avenue for sorting and matching materials, by identifying the exact device used to capture the materials and linking it to other materials captured by the same device.

But even then, our work will not be over.

As ICSE and national focal points get better at identifying perpetrators and stopping child abuse, offenders will choose the easy way out.

They will simply cross borders, presenting us with the challenge of a moving target.

This is why INTERPOL encourages its 190 member countries to alert their counterparts about these mobile threats. So-called INTERPOL Green Notices can be issued for high-risk travelling

sex offenders, in order to warn law enforcement globally, and take the appropriate measures in accordance with national laws.

Given the nature of the crime, risks of recidivism and irreversible damage to victims, however, requests for Green Notices should not just be periodic like they are today, but systematic.

Across a century of international police cooperation, INTERPOL has learned that knowledge is power, but unshared knowledge is simply a missed opportunity.

Green Notices are one way to seize this opportunity; cross-sector partnerships are another.

The capacity of law enforcement to stop offenders and remove the materials they publish is limited without a closer symbiotic relationship with industry.

Industry must be empowered to recognize the worst material out there, to report it to law enforcement, and to remove it from the Internet.

The Recognize, Report and Remove, or "Triple R" approach started with the INTERPOL List of the Worst web domains offering child abuse material. This list, known as IWOL, is updated regularly and made available to industry.

Now, we are extending cooperation beyond IWOL to our "Baseline" list, which allows industry to cross-match image signatures hosted on their network against signatures extracted from some of the worst child abuse materials in ICSE.

Currently in the pilot phase, it's named "Baseline" because the list contains only materials that are considered abusive and illegal anywhere in the world, where applicable legislation exists.

To maximize our collaboration, however, INTERPOL strives to ensure dialogue and information-sharing channels remain open and active through multidisciplinary, cross-sector communities, like STOPCAM.

STOPCAM is an industry-led initiative launched this year that brings together a handful of ground-level experts in law enforcement, NGOs, and industry, including Facebook, INHOPE, Zuiz, Videntifier, Blue Bear, Adobe and NetClean.

The goal is to develop and convey common, effective messages globally on a range of issues, such as handling a child abuse material incident within a network, and ways to counter the underlying resource challenges faced by practitioners and experts.

Part of these messages requires better metrics to help assess the scope and context of online child exploitation.

We don't know for certain how many victims are out there; we don't know where the "blind spots" are in our response; and we don't know the costs to society or to those affected by it.

A greater contribution to the ICSE database could help to build a wider, more rigorous sample as a reference to study some of these questions.

The answers we get could then provide a way to underscore concretely to decision-makers the importance of the work that is being done.

This, in turn, will launch us into a virtuous cycle – building strong, effective programmes that attract resources; produce measurable results; allow for tailored improvements; leading to even stronger, more effective programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have an international responsibility to tackle online child exploitation. It is not new. It compelled us to action in the past, but it must be revitalized today, to allow for meaningful action tomorrow.

Every single time an image of abuse finds a new audience in cyberspace, yet another scar appears on a victim in real life.

But when the same material finds a dedicated, trained expert with the right skills and knowledge; or an industry that believes both in human progress and success in the market, a new flicker of hope is sparked somewhere in the world.

We are at a tipping point. We face a manageable problem where the technology and tools exist to effectively stop it, and the discussions between critical actors that need to happen are happening.

What is still needed is sustained global engagement, and requisite financial and in-kind support for actors, such as law enforcement, industry and NGOs, in order to help them push ahead, and evolve as rapidly as the problem evolves.

This event represents an opportunity for us to draw a line, and move forward in this direction, with new thinking, greater sharing, and better engagement against online child exploitation.

If we do this, we can be sure that in the future no offender escapes justice; no abuse is echoed over and over in cyberspace; and no victim is left behind.

Thank you.