



Opening Address

by

Jürgen Stock

SECOND MEETING OF POLICE CHIEFS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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SPD review: *Nitin KATARA*
Subject matter expert (if applicable): *Abdulaziz OBAIDALLA*
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STRUCTURE OF REMARKS

I. INTRODUCTION – Paragraphs 1 to 3

Welcoming participants, in particular the State of Palestine and Dr. Koman

II. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND - Paragraphs 4 to 6

Setting out the context for this second meeting of MENA Police Chiefs

III. PROGRESS MADE: STATUTORY MATTERS - Paragraphs 7 to 9

Describing key updates since the last meeting: the election of EC VP AFR; the lifting of corrective measures on Libya; the Consultative Group on the Establishment of (a) Regional Bureau(s)

IV. PROGRESS MADE: OPERATIONAL ADVANCES - Paragraphs 10 to 13

Listing some of the training courses and conferences on specific crime areas which have taken place since the meeting in October 2016

V. PROGRESS MADE: STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE - Paragraphs 14 to 16

Explaining recent developments in promoting regional cooperation with INTERPOL on policing matters, such as AIMC participation, the GCC agreement, and AFRIPOL involvement

VI. IMPERATIVE TO CONTINUE - Paragraphs 17 to 19

Remarking that progress must continue, and that the objective of this meeting is to continue the momentum to identify challenges and solutions

VII. CONCLUSION – Paragraphs 20 and 21

Underlining the need for a constructive meeting and thanking the participants for their attention.

Your Excellencies,

Chiefs of Police,

Secretary General of the Arab Interior Ministers Council,

Vice-President of the Executive Committee,

Director of GCCPOL,

Heads of Delegation,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. Assalam aleykum. Ahlan wa sahan¹.

¹ Welcome

I. INTRODUCTION

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the General Secretariat. It is gratifying to see so many countries in attendance, and I appreciate the efforts you have made to come here today from across the Middle East and North Africa to participate in this important INTERPOL meeting.
2. I would like to extend a special greeting to the State of Palestine, whose representatives are joining us at their first meeting as an INTERPOL member country. I am delighted to receive you at our headquarters, and I look forward to your valuable participation. Your opinions and input are of great interest to us, and we will surely benefit from your fresh and unique standpoint.
3. Please allow me also to express my appreciation for the presence here today of Dr. Koman, whose wisdom and leadership have greatly benefited INTERPOL, our Arab membership, and our important relationship with the Arab Interior Ministers Council.

II. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

4. At the outset of this meeting, I note that it has been just over a year since I convened the first Regional Consultation for Chiefs of Police of the Middle East and North Africa. I can remember clearly my impressions of the deep engagement on the part of the delegates, many of whom are here today. I recall the interesting perspectives put forward, and clear views expressed about regional threats and needs.
5. The result of the consultations was a set of recommendations for the Organisation's work in the region, which were adopted as part of the INTERPOL 2020 reform process during the 2016 General Assembly in Bali.
6. In the year following that meeting, I am pleased to note that progress has been made in many key areas. As I said in closing the meeting last year, INTERPOL seeks to be a responsive and agile organisation, and we are working to meet and implement the demands of our member

countries. I would like to mention a few developments since we met here in October 2016.

III. PROGRESS MADE: STATUTORY MATTERS

7. First, a key issue highlighted by our Arab membership in our last meeting was the lack of an Arabic-speaking representative in INTERPOL's Executive Committee. As you know, at our 86th General Assembly in Beijing, INTERPOL's member countries elected a Vice-President for Africa from Algeria. I am grateful that we are joined here today by Mr. Benyamina Abbad, and look forward to his instrumental contributions to our discussions.

8. The General Secretariat is also liaising closely with our National Central Bureau in Tripoli to ensure that Libya resumes its full capacity as an INTERPOL member country. We remain committed to working with the authorities, including during our upcoming mission to Tripoli, to support Libya and its integral role in regional and global security.

9. A matter raised in the meeting last year by many member countries was that of the establishment of regional INTERPOL presence in the Middle East and North Africa. I am therefore pleased that the outcomes of the first meeting of the Consultative Group, which was held yesterday, will be presented by its Chair and Vice-Chair this afternoon.

IV. PROGRESS MADE: OPERATIONAL ADVANCES

10. Operational issues were also discussed at our last meeting, with member countries underlining the need for additional support by INTERPOL to combat regional crime trends.
11. In the subsequent twelve months, a number of training courses tailor-made for the region have been held. We will hear more later today about these capacity building programmes in the Middle East and North Africa, including those to tackle terrorism and detect the smuggling of radiological and nuclear material.

12. INTERPOL has also been proud to support our member countries in the region through participation in high-level operational meetings. An example is the pioneering forum organised by Saudi Arabia on “Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Internet and through other Technological Means” last November. Operational meetings for the Al-Qabdah project have been organised in the region; and the Trigger III firearms smuggling operation preparations are ongoing.

13. Another is Project Stadia’s first Major Event Safety and Security Conference, earlier this month in Qatar; which will also host the Fifth INTERPOL Global Conference on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants the week after next.

V. PROGRESS MADE: STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

14. In addition to these meetings on specific crime areas, we have also looked to strengthen cooperation and activities in the region on a strategic level. I have met with senior police leaders and government

officials from the Middle East and North Africa during my missions in the region this year, including most recently in Bahrain.

15. In March this year, the Unity for Security Forum, hosted jointly by the United Arab Emirates, INTERPOL, and the INTERPOL Foundation, brought together ministers with security portfolios, senior police officials, and representatives from the private sector. Participants discussed seven cross-cutting crime threats, with regional and global implications – such as the trafficking of illicit drugs, including captagon; and transnational vehicle crime.

16. I was honoured to attend the 34th Session of the Arab Interior Ministers Council (AIMC) in Tunisia, as well as the Chiefs of Police Meeting of AIMC last December. We increased our cooperation with regional bodies such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with whom an agreement was signed in February for cooperation with GCCPOL; and AFRIPOL, whose operationalisation we strongly support.

VI. IMPERATIVE TO CONTINUE

17. It is essential that we maintain this momentum and continue identifying ways for INTERPOL to support policing efforts in the region. To this end, we have called this meeting today to confer about updates, challenges, and improvements.
18. I look forward to hearing your assessments of national and regional threats, and to our interactive discussions later on the ways in which INTERPOL's global policing capabilities can be better leveraged to assist your police.
19. I am here to listen to your direct feedback on INTERPOL's activities: what works, what does not work, and why not. These constructive inputs from you will enable us to enhance the support which we provide to you, our member countries, and the region as a whole.

VII. CONCLUSION

Your Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen,

20. I hope that we can continue to increase our efforts to achieving our shared security goals. I am positive that our discussions today will bear fruit and build on the progress we have already made together.

21. Thank you for your attention. Shukran jazilan.