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25th Annual Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP) General Meeting and Conference

Opening Address by [Ronald K. Noble](#) INTERPOL Secretary General
25 May 2010 – St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands

Commissioner Darwin Dottin of the Royal Barbados Police and ACCP President;
Commissioner Novelle E. Francis Jr. of the US Virgin Islands Police Department;
Distinguished ACCP Chiefs of Police;
Good morning.

I am happy to be here today in beautiful Rock City, and to visit for the 14th time a member of the ACCP as the Secretary General of INTERPOL.

It is also a true privilege to open this Annual General Meeting, addressing at once the leaders of 24 police services from the Caribbean region, who are faced with unique challenges in their daily work.

I say this, as my memory goes back to 1989: that year, following the destructive passage of Hurricane Hugo, I was assigned as a representative of the US Attorney General to the US Marshals Special Operations Group, sent here in the US Virgin Islands to help restore law and order.

On that occasion, the local population did not only have to face displacement and massive damage to basic infrastructures. Extensive looting and prison escapes soon contributed to create a near-anarchy situation.

It was my first trip to the Caribbean.

Probably only a police officer born and grown in the Caribbean can truly appreciate the challenges that hurricanes like Hugo present for a country or region's law enforcement officers – thanks to his or her first-hand experience and to the recurring nature of the threat that hurricane season brings.

Somebody like Mr. Hilton Guy, who served as Commissioner of Police of Trinidad and Tobago from 1998 to 2003, and as ACCP President between 2000 and 2002.

It was under his leadership, among many other achievements, that the ACCP saw a formal agreement with the Government of Barbados to host the Association's Secretariat, and that INTERPOL began to be regularly invited to attend the Association's meetings and to have ACCP observers to its regional conferences

After a life dedicated to fight crime, Mr Guy is now bravely fighting an even more difficult battle against illness.

Let our prayers and our support be with him, just like his unabated belief in international police co-operation never left INTERPOL and the Caribbean alone, as he proudly led the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police.

An institution that since 1987 has ensured that a pivotal principle would be followed by police leadership: that no true local and national security can be attained, without meaningful regional police co-operation.

And as the Head of the world's largest police organization, it is my firm belief that no effective global policing can be ensured, without regional police cooperation at its foundation.

The same foundation INTERPOL relies on daily, fulfilling its global mandate.

On this day 166 years ago, Samuel Morse sent the first successful telegraph message, making the first step towards a more interconnected world.

In the same way, INTERPOL operates every day to connect police across the globe, seeking to turn borders from opportunities for criminals into barriers against their activities.

And I am sure that you are in the best position to fully grasp this challenge, as the leaders of the police services of a unique region.

Unique in the potential impact of violent crime on its economies.

Recent estimates have put the costs of insecurity in the Caribbean between 5-10 per cent of the aggregate regional GDP. Others have underlined how drastically reducing violent crime rates would bring substantial gains in annual economic growth in the region.

What is certain is that to achieve these results we should all look beyond our own borders.

The uniqueness of the Caribbean lies also in its openness and reliance on transnational flows. Think of tourism, international trade and foreign capital.

It is no surprise that this very region has been defined a pioneer of globalization.

But as such, it is unique in its vulnerability to potential criminal threats from abroad. Illicit trafficking flows – often originating and heading outside of the region – can easily fuel violence in Caribbean economies.

This calls for the development of lasting police capacity to reduce gaps between local and international policing.

INTERPOL is ready to face this challenge, together with the Caribbean.

Not only did we choose capacity building as one of our four strategic priorities for the next three years.

We are acting upon it as we speak.

In just a few weeks we will hold a specialized workshop in St. Lucia on internet-related drug trafficking. It will bring together international trainers and selected officers from this region.

The objective will be to develop the unique skills necessary to tackle a rapidly growing and disturbing global phenomenon, so that they can be applied in the field here in the Caribbean.

At the same time, our Financial and High Tech Crime unit is planning a new initiative on Intellectual Property Crime, which will combine advanced training and multinational operations across more than 10 countries in the Americas, most of which from the Caribbean.

These are just two simple examples of INTERPOL's commitment to capacity building in this region.

A commitment that stems from our unique relationship with the Caribbean, based on pioneering initiatives, and strong on-the-ground support.

For instance, take INTERPOL's unprecedented collaboration with the nine host nations of the 2007 Cricket World Cup.

On that occasion, we deployed an INTERPOL Major Event Support Team on the ground starting in October 2006, assisting local authorities in security arrangements for a massive international event involving nine countries at once.

The lessons learned during that exercise were invaluable, and they remain so as we are deploying INTERPOL specialized officers to South Africa for the next FIFA World Cup.

And in 2007, it was in the Caribbean that INTERPOL deployed its MIND/FIND technology for the first time through an entire region.

With a revolution in border security management, the front lines of police became able to access INTERPOL's global Stolen and Lost Travel Document database, with incredible results.

The same countries that had run only a little more than 400 checks against our database in 2006 were able to cross-check more than 240,000 passports by March 2007. And today, the Caribbean is still reaping the benefits of that initiative.

For instance, in January 2010 five passengers carrying Swedish passports were prevented from transiting through Trinidad and Tobago to St. Martin. This was due to multiple hits in the global SLTD database.

Investigations not only revealed that the passports were stolen and had been acquired in Venezuela. With the group – composed of Iranian nationals – was also travelling an individual wanted by the Netherlands on human trafficking charges.

No such information would have been obtained, without the deployment of MIND solutions in Port-of-Spain.

Multiple individuals would have unlawfully gained entry into the Caribbean.

One more human smuggler would have accomplished his mission.

But they were not allowed to.

There is no doubt in my mind that also thanks to this kind of results in the Caribbean, we managed to gain key support to extend this technology to more than 50 countries across the world.

What was achieved, here in this region, contributed to bring global police data sharing to a whole new level.

Such is the power of a visionary idea, when combined with a pioneering spirit.

And as Secretary General, it is my sincere hope that INTERPOL will be able to rely on this same spirit, shown by the Caribbean before, as we launch new initiatives in our quest against international crime.

Among these, is the recognition of the INTERPOL Travel Document by our member countries.

Our vision is that of a world where officials travelling on behalf of INTERPOL at the request of our members can do so faster, and more effectively, than the criminals we seek to counter.

The INTERPOL travel document will thus facilitate and expedite the travel of INTERPOL representatives required to travel internationally on official missions, in order to serve police cooperation and assist law enforcement officers in member countries.

It will be used at border crossings to identify the bearer as an INTERPOL representative. According to member countries' preferences and in full respect of their national sovereignty, it can entitle its holders to special visa status.

By formally recognizing this travel document, member countries will be contributing to more effective INTERPOL support on the ground. The same support the Caribbean has enjoyed from our 2007 IMEST, and the deployment of multiple Incident Response Teams to the region in the past few years.

To date, four member countries have already agreed to formally recognize INTERPOL travel documents and give them special visa status. Several others have already expressed strong interest in following their footsteps.

We now need your support, as leaders of Caribbean police services, to bring key players in the region to believe in this initiative, so that borders will not stand as obstacles to swift international police collaboration in the aftermath of major crises.

And I am more than confident that, once again, the world will follow the Caribbean in its commitment to new, groundbreaking steps in international police co-operation.

Thank you very much, I wish you all a productive conference.