

INTERPOL President's Remarks – 21st African Regional Conference
(Gaborone, Botswana – 16-18 February 2011)

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Defence, Justice and Security;
Mr. Augustine Makgonatsothe, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of
Defense, Justice and Security;
Mr. Thebeyame E. Tsimako,
Commissioner of Botswana Police Service;
Mr. Ronald K. Noble,
INTERPOL Secretary General;
INTERPOL Executive Committee Members;
Distinguished delegates from the INTERPOL African member
countries;
Honourable Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;*

Good morning:

I am honored to be with all of you here today in Gaborone.
Thank you for making the time and effort to attend this important
Regional Conference in spite of your busy schedule.

This is my third visit to Africa as INTERPOL President
and my second time joining you at this African Regional
Conference. Our African brothers have always impressed me and
my colleagues with your unique brand of warmth and hospitality.

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Botswana and to the Botswana Police Service, led by Brother Edward, for the generous and gracious hosting of this 21st African Regional Conference.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate all our INTERPOL African member countries for the very successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup last summer. While the games were primarily held in South Africa, I am sure many of us will agree that its success owed much to the overwhelming support and co-operation of the all the African people. As witnessed by the whole world, it was truly an African Soccer World Cup. I am happy and proud that INTERPOL was able to contribute to this remarkable success on the security front.

We are now entering the second decade of the 21st Century and I believe that NOW is the time for Africa. We have witnessed the uptrend in direct foreign investments flowing into your continent. The International Finance Center of the World Bank reportedly invested more than US 2 billion dollars in Africa in 2010. This and other investments provide stimuli to economic growth and development, energising both the public and private sectors. In communications and technology, the African continent registered the highest increase of internet users from year 2000 to 2010, registering more than a 2,000 per cent increase in the past

decade. Estimates indicate that the number of internet users today in Africa has reached more than 100 million or 10 per cent of the total population of the continent. I am confident that Africa will continue to steadily move forward in the coming years, fully embracing globalization and becoming even more active in the global community.

While we enjoy the benefits of globalization and economic growth, we should also be wary of the corresponding dark underside. While it is true that globalization spurs economic development, it has also opened opportunities for highly sophisticated and organized criminal syndicates to pursue a complex web of lucrative activities, both legal and illegal, worldwide.

Developments that have made possible the ease and timely movement of goods, people and money around the world, have also facilitated the movement of ill-gotten money, drugs, counterfeit goods, arms and illegal immigrants. For us in the law enforcement fraternity, we are now constantly confronted with complex crimes that transcend national borders. We have seen how drug traffickers exploited less robust border control points to diversify and establish new trans-shipment points. Each day, we face the challenge of transnational criminal groups expanding their theatre and scope of operations, becoming more internationalized

and sophisticated, and perpetuating more complex crimes such as cyber fraud. Terrorist organizations, for example, have been observed to exploit the advent of modern information and communication technology to recruit and to train would-be terrorist operatives in order to further their sinister agendas.

All these new security challenges have put our traditional law enforcement methods under scrutiny. At the same time it has also provide the impetus for greater and more effective operational cooperation, not only among local police units, but also between national, regional and international law enforcement agencies. Indeed, we can no longer ignore the need to transcend from national to international policing.

Better integration and enhanced co-operation beyond our respective borders are vital elements to an effective campaign against modern international crimes. Developing a strong and united front is critical to fighting crime successfully. We owe this not only to ourselves, our families, our police officers but to the entire society which expects no less than our best efforts in keeping them safe. My country, Singapore, recognizing this has evolved our NCB from a five-man team to a 35-man department in 2009. And as you may be aware, Singapore is firmly committed to helping enhance the capability and value-add of our Organisation – INTERPOL – by offering to host the INTERPOL Global Complex,

or IGC in short. And I am happy to note that all our African brothers supported the resolution in relation to the IGC at the 79th INTERPOL General Assembly in Doha, as evident from the unanimous vote cast.

In today's world, we are expected to be always available whenever or wherever we may be. Advance developments in information and communication technology enable a person to be always 'connected' to the rest of the world. In 2003, INTERPOL launched the I-24/7 secure global communications system that connects law enforcement officials in all of its [188 member countries](#) and provides them with the means to share crucial information on criminals and criminal activities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The I-24/7 system also enables our police officers to gain access to the different INTERPOL tools and services. I am sure that all of us will agree that the I-24/7 system has transformed INTERPOL operationally and directly contributed towards many successful international crime-busting stories. Having said that, it is timely that we take cognizance that for the system to reach its potential, it should be expanded beyond the National Central Bureaus to frontline police officers, to border control points and to specialized crime investigators. We must strive for law enforcement across the region and beyond to quickly and securely exchange information and access our global

databases. Let this be our first step towards a united front against crime.

Connecting our police officers across the world is a vital element in developing an effective and holistic approach against international crime. However, equally important is the need to look at these new crime challenges from a global, regional and national perspective. Critical to the success of this endeavor are our National Central Bureaus (NCBs) and Regional Bureaus (RBs). The NCBs serve as the gateways of police information and the vital contact points for all INTERPOL activities in each member country while the RBs bring INTERPOL closer to the regions. Here in Africa, thanks to your very strong support, we have four of the six INTERPOL Regional Bureaus (RBs): in Abidjan; in Harare; in Nairobi and in Yaoundé, which provide INTERPOL with a full coverage of the entire African continent. These Regional Bureaus are working very closely with the different African Regional Police Chiefs Committees to define the best possible strategy for the region. Together, let us make these Regional Bureaus and National Central Bureaus leading instruments in facilitating police co-operation. By empowering and placing them in a position where they can really make a difference, this would be our second step and would bring us yet another step closer towards developing a united front against crime.

As we continue to develop new and innovative ways to combat modern-day transnational crimes, we should not forget to develop the most important asset that we have, i.e. our police officers. To be effective, today's law enforcement personnel ought to have a strong understanding of international policing in fighting transnational organized crime. Serious crime investigators are now expected to think and act beyond national boundaries, and should be able to work effectively with their foreign counterparts on a bilateral, multilateral or global basis. Building the capacity of our police officers should remain one of our top priorities. We must ensure that our officers possess the necessary skills to investigate and fight serious transnational crimes. This would be our third step towards developing a united front against crime.

In closing, allow me to reiterate that NOW is the time for Africa. NOW is the time to strengthen our police capacities to fight 21st Century crime. NOW is the time to look beyond national borders to fight crime. With the rest of the world, NOW is the time to establish a united front against international crime and terrorism. And in these endeavours, the INTERPOL Executive Committee, represented here by Mr Magdy ELSHAFFEY – Delegate for Africa; Mr Adamu MOHAMMED – Delegate for Africa; and Mr Petter DYHRE – Delegate for Europe, together with our very dynamic and dedicated Secretary General, Mr Ronald K. NOBLE, and all our INTERPOL colleagues in IPSG and the RBs, we all

assure you of INTERPOL's utmost support and co-operation.
INTERPOL is here for you.

And on that note, I wish everyone a pleasant and fruitful
conference. Thank you.