

71st INTERPOL General Assembly

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by [Mr Espigares Mira](#),
President of INTERPOL

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Cameroon
Members of the Government,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Authorities,
Distinguished guests,
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me - and it gives me great satisfaction - to have this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Delegations from INTERPOL member countries represented here, and on behalf of the Executive Committee and the Secretary General, our sincere thanks to the authorities of the Republic of Cameroon for hosting this [71st session of the General Assembly in Yaoundé](#). It is indeed a demonstration of the Republic of Cameroon's commitment to INTERPOL and a further sign of its determination to step up the fight against international crime.



President Espigares Mira

Ever since it became a member of the Organization in 1961, Cameroon has distinguished itself by its committed participation in INTERPOL's activities. To mention but two examples: the extraordinary welcome extended to the 8th African Regional Conference in 1982, and the country's active involvement in the work of the Committee of Central African Regional Chiefs of Police, of which Cameroon held the Presidency in 1999 and 2001 and organized its meetings in 1999 and 2000.

I must also extend our most sincere thanks to the members of the Organizing Committee for the tremendous efforts they have made to ensure that this session of the General Assembly can be held in this magnificent hall with all the necessary facilities to allow our discussions to be held under the best possible conditions.

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

As I am now coming to the end of my second year as President of INTERPOL, I think it would be fitting to refer once again, as I did at the end of my first year, to the Organization's aims which, in the Executive Committee's opinion, demand our full attention if INTERPOL is to maintain its leading position in the field of international police co-operation in the 21st century.

The many projects and proposals which have been submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration during the past year, as well as my ongoing contacts with the Secretary General, clearly show that the Organization is going through a decisive phase in its history.

The achievement of some of the goals set out in the Strategic Development Plan and the start of work on others, together with the new concept of world security as we now perceive it following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States, all mean that our Organization has to adapt to the new situation and strengthen those areas of its activity which are seen to be crucial to providing a quality

service for its Members. In this connection, the Secretary General is to be congratulated on the measures he has already taken in his far-reaching reorganization of the General Secretariat, with its emphasis on areas which will allow the Organization to improve its service to its member countries, by providing more accurate police information and responding to their enquiries more promptly.

However, you will agree with me that, at this historic moment in its life, INTERPOL - as the only worldwide organization for international police co-operation - has no option but to take further measures without delay to allow it to remain at the forefront of international police co-operation. The Executive Committee is convinced that if the Organization is to face up to this new situation successfully, it must make certain **readjustments** to renew its **telecommunications system**, to clearly define its **strategic priorities** in the short- and medium-term, to provide the necessary **legal framework** to allow its Member States to participate fully in the sharing and processing of information and, above all, to give itself the necessary **financial resources** to carry through all these activities; in this way, INTERPOL can fulfil its role to remain the world's pre-eminent organization in support of all organizations, authorities and services whose mission is preventing and detecting international crime.

To meet these challenges successfully, INTERPOL can draw on many resources, including its undisputed **universal character**, a character which will be further bolstered during the General Assembly session by the addition of two new members, if you accept the applications for membership being presented by **Afghanistan and East Timor**. The addition of these two new members has a two-fold significance: firstly, the presence in our Organization of Afghanistan and East Timor will considerably improve the ability of the police community to fight international crime; secondly, their involvement in the Organization's activities is a further demonstration of the value the international community attaches to INTERPOL as a vital instrument for police co-operation.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

At its most recent meetings, the Executive Committee has examined in great detail the Secretary General's proposals regarding the strategic objectives the Organization should adopt and the budget resources needed to support them.

Regarding the objectives, and bearing in mind Article 2 of the Organization's Constitution and the demands reaching us from our [member countries](#), we have to encourage the exchange of information (acting as mediator and supplier), facilitate international co-ordination, and give added value to the information, which is the Organization's principal task.

These fundamental issues call for an additional series of projects to be developed during the period 2002-2005. These are as follows:

Global, advanced, secure communications system:

As you know, Project Atlas had to be halted at the initiative of the General Secretariat because the company managing the project could not guarantee that it would be able to respect the agreed budget.

Secondly, an urgent decision had to be taken regarding the X.400 system because of its excessive cost and technological obsolescence.

To remedy this situation, the Secretary General opted to equip the Organization with a flexible, worldwide communications network based on Internet protocols and with adequate security measures, a factor of prime importance for an organization handling extremely sensitive data.

Consolidation of a Command and Co-ordination Centre at the General Secretariat

INTERPOL must consolidate the initiative taken as an immediate reaction to the 11 September attacks, which was to set up a centre capable of responding 24 hours a day, and thus cover the time zones of all the continents. This centre must be able to respond in all four of the Organization's official languages; it must have qualified staff working in teams, with the necessary facilities to respond to member countries' enquiries and assist them in preventing, investigating and fighting serious international crime.

Improvement of the regional and national police services provided for member countries

The diversity and specificity of the problems experienced by different regions and countries means that INTERPOL should endeavour to provide each with personalized support, and demonstrate the relevance of the Organization's role for police forces in member countries.

Over the next three years, INTERPOL must concentrate on increasing its level of support to the **Sub-Regional Bureaus** and the **NCBs**; it must do everything necessary to provide financing for the regional bodies, so that all may benefit from the same quality service, independently of any economic and social crises which may arise in the countries where these bodies are located.

INTERPOL DATABASES

Regarding the direction in which the Organization's strategic objectives should be pursued, the information recorded in INTERPOL's databases (stolen vehicles, works of art, payment instruments, etc.) should be presented in a standardized manner, and the legal framework governing the compilation, storage and distribution of the data should be amended to meet today's requirements.

In addition, the Organization's programmes and projects must take account of the priorities set by the international community (international terrorism, traffic in human beings, etc.) so that police services can be given the specialized up-to-date knowledge they need to assist with their investigations.

THE ORGANIZATION'S FINANCES

In my speech to the 70th session of the General Assembly, I referred to the need to make various changes relating to the Organization's finances.

In this connection, a change in the contribution system was proposed and adopted with the aim of making the system more equitable in the light of each country's ability to contribute.

It was pointed out at the time that the change in the contribution system was not in itself the final answer to all the Organization's financial needs: it would not avoid the need to draw on the reserves to balance the budget, or provide hope that budget contributions would remain stable.

However, the 11 September 2001 attacks highlighted many shortcomings in the world's preventive security systems, and indeed within international police co-operations institutions.

Since 1994 (the 63rd General Assembly session in Rome, Italy) the idea has gained acceptance that the functioning of the Organization was based on the policy of a fixed 2% increase in expenditure. The reality, as we shall be seeing during this General Assembly session, is very different.

Furthermore, since 1996 there has been an average increase in the Organization's expenditure of some 7%, which has made it necessary to draw on the reserves over the last two years in order to balance the budget.

A 2% increase in 2003, the annual increase which has been applied since 1994, would imply a reduction in the services currently provided, as will be explained during this Assembly session, and naturally, would not allow any of the development projects I have mentioned to be launched.

Maintaining the current level of services supposes an increase in contributions of 11.3%, with no possibility of starting on new projects.

To implement the objectives of the Strategic Development Plan, with the priorities fixed, will require a contributions increase of 23.4%, which is being submitted to this Assembly in the Draft Budget for 2003 with appropriate explanations. As the Secretary General will explain in detail, under the contribution system in force, this increase will fall basically on three groups of countries which are making the highest contributions and **113 countries will see no increase in their contributions.**

Taking into account the advice of the Finance Sub-Committee and the Strategic Development Sub-Committee, the Executive Committee has examined the proposals for the Organization's budget and for its strategic priorities, as presented by the Secretary General. It supports these proposals unanimously, convinced that they are proportionate, viable, expedient and of vital importance to enable the Organization to continue providing the support that the international police community needs in its fight against the threat posed by crime.

Distinguished Delegates, I am confident that when the time comes to discuss the Organization's finances, you will understand that INTERPOL needs to determine its future, by consolidating its position as a subject of International Law and modernizing its response capability as a global organization for international police co-operation.

The threat of indiscriminate terrorism, the changing nature of crime, its positively harmful effects, are the consequence of activities planned in one place, carried out in another, with ramifications in yet other countries. All this demands a response which is proportionate to the threat, and to be able to respond, INTERPOL must have the necessary resources so that it can make them available to police organizations in member countries, ensuring that the different agencies all have the same possibilities, independently of the countries in which they are situated.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

In my address, I have attempted to outline what our Organization's objectives and strategic priorities must be for the next few years. I have also mentioned the urgent need for the Organization to make certain readjustments of a strategic, legal and economic nature so that it can remain in the vanguard of international police co-operation.

I am now halfway through my term of office as President of the Organization. During the past two years, relations between the Executive Committee and the General Secretariat, and between the President and the Secretary General have been smooth and marked by constructive dialogue and discussion in dealing with the Organization's affairs.

At the end of this Assembly session, the terms of office of a number of members of the Executive Committee will come to an end. I cannot finish, therefore, without paying tribute to my colleagues, Mr Abbott, Mr Chihuri, Mr Molina Ferraro, Ms Ojomo and Mr Tasiopoulos not present for reasons beyond his control who, guided by the sole aim of serving the Organization, have all demonstrated their understanding of police issues and the role of international co-operation; the balanced nature and quality of their contributions have taught me a great deal and served as a fine example. I am most grateful to them all.

The staff of the General Secretariat, the National Central Bureaus and the Sub-Regional Bureaus are the driving force behind INTERPOL and provide the link with the Organization's users - the police forces in our member countries. To them also I wish to express my gratitude and that of the Executive Committee for the extraordinary work they carry out from day to day.

Our thanks too, go to the large number of observers who have become involved in our work. I should like them to know that their interest in INTERPOL's activities is a great source of personal satisfaction. Let me also express my solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attack in Bali, Indonesia.

MR PRESIDENT,

On behalf of INTERPOL, before I close, I should like once again to thank Your Excellency most sincerely for having honoured us with your presence, and to thank your country for hosting and organizing this General Assembly session. You may be truly proud of the work done by the Organizing Committee which has provided us with the infrastructure we need to ensure this session can be held under the best possible conditions.

Thank you very much.