

## 70th INTERPOL General Assembly

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'Mr President, Members of the Executive Committee, Delegates, Observers, our Hungarian Hosts, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is a great honour for me to address you at my first General Assembly as Secretary General. It has been a little over ten months since receiving your confirmation in Rhodes, Greece.

A great many changes have occurred in my life, at INTERPOL and in the world since last November. In fact, I had planned to deliver a speech today that outlined the many accomplishments and changes underway not only at INTERPOL Headquarters in Lyon and in our sub-regional bureaus, but indeed in INTERPOL offices around the world. If you knew in detail the great effort and sacrifices being made by your colleagues in the INTERPOL family you would be as proud as I am. But you know that the ever-changing nature of the world and criminal activity requires the ability to redirect one's resources and efforts when emergencies arise. Such an emergency has caused me to refocus my remarks today and to talk about something more important than our successes.

On 11 September, at a little before 3 p.m. in Lyon or a little before 9 a.m. in New York, the world changed and the world's collective appreciation of the threat posed by terrorists changed. Among the thousands of people murdered in cold blood on that day were citizens from over 80 countries. They perished on planes, in buildings, in the countryside and in the streets. They represented all races and ages, many religions, many nationalities and diverse backgrounds. Let there be no doubt about it, the terrorist attacks may have occurred on United States soil, but they constituted attacks against the entire world and its citizens. Of particular significance to INTERPOL was the murder of the scores of New York City police officers, firefighters and emergency workers who arrived on the scene of this emergency to help those in need.

Police officers time and time again confront the uncertainty of leaving home to go to work, not knowing whether their duty to protect and to serve on any given day will place them in harm's way. Police officers also know that terrorists frequently plan a second attack to follow immediately after an initial attack in order to kill or harm the police officers called to the scene. For this reason those police officers who died when buildings collapsed in New York on 11 September were murdered just as if the terrorists had killed them when the planes crashed into the buildings. Their fate was carefully planned.

Yes, the world changed on 11 September 2001 and so did INTERPOL. INTERPOL's Headquarters had been under a re-organization, and the planned re-organization was going to be announced to the Headquarters staff on 12 September for implementation on 17 September. Because of the tragic events of 11 September, the implementation of INTERPOL's planned changes were accelerated.

We had planned to go from a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., five days a week international organization to a 24-hour, 7 days a week, 365 days a year police organization on 17 September. We were putting this into place before the second plane hit the World Trade Center and the third plane hit Washington. We had planned this change because we knew that the needs of our INTERPOL offices worldwide required broader and

improved service. Before 11 September, there were some who doubted whether INTERPOL needed to change in such a drastic fashion; now all know why the change was planned and why it is necessary.

The tragedy of 11 September had caused some to suggest that we postpone or cancel this 70th General Assembly. Others have suggested that it should be business as usual. In my humble opinion, neither response would have been in the best interest of INTERPOL and its member countries. Cancelling a general assembly designed to improve international police co-operation to fight serious crime would have been a victory for the terrorists.

The President, the Executive Committee, our Hungarian hosts and the General Secretariat were in unanimous agreement that the General Assembly should go forward. Indeed, we agreed to use these awful events and this General Assembly to build a better INTERPOL... but it will never be business as usual again – not at this General Assembly and not in the INTERPOL family. INTERPOL will never be the same again. We will never again turn out the lights and close the doors at INTERPOL Headquarters.

In my remarks this morning, I would like to sketch out for you ideas on what INTERPOL's future might look like. But more importantly, in this conference I want to challenge each of you to give my staff and me your ideas on how we should:

- First**, respond to the single most deadly terrorist act in the history of the world;
- Second**, prioritize terrorism at INTERPOL Headquarters; and
- Third**, better address the needs of our member countries.

President Espigares Mira and the Executive Committee have demonstrated great leadership over the last year. The President has already told you that we must demonstrate our solidarity by the overwhelming adoption of a resolution condemning the cold-blooded murder of thousands of citizens from all over the world and committing ourselves to working together to bring those responsible to justice. But, we must do more and more what is proposed in the draft resolution. We need to agree on concrete steps that can be taken to make the world safer – beginning in each of our home countries, our INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, and at the INTERPOL General Secretariat. We also must not be afraid to discuss candidly weaknesses that have been exposed and we must not be afraid to insist that our strengths be reinforced.

Let me focus on our strengths. Our colleagues, the police who rushed to help those in the towers, demonstrated the courage of the men and women who make up our profession. The FBI, the USNCB, German, British and Italian police officials in the field demonstrated the speed with which critical investigative information could be gathered, analysed and acted upon. Headquarters implementation of 24-hour service, its creation of an 11 September Crisis Task Force, its publication of relevant information on the INTERPOL Web Page, and its contacting of INTERPOL's Disaster Victim Identification teams demonstrated an ability to provide essential operational and member country support. Finally, NCBs' messages offering condolences, support and assistance from all parts of the globe highlighted that above all INTERPOL is more than an organization of police professionals. In short, this tragedy has demonstrated that INTERPOL is a family and this tragedy has brought our family closer together. No task was too difficult and no job too arduous. But we must and we will do more.

To begin the debate on the future of INTERPOL, let me suggest the following ideas for discussion.

I have already told you that INTERPOL Headquarters will never close its doors and turn off the lights again. In INTERPOL member countries the collective business week is 7 days, and the collective business day is 24 hours. So, INTERPOL Headquarters must be available at all times. Regardless of what part of the globe you come from and regardless of what holidays you celebrate, INTERPOL will be open for business... receiving and disseminating messages and responding to the needs of the world's police. But we can do more.

Later in this conference, the re-organization will be discussed. You will learn that we have tripled the staff involved in regional and national police support and created Assistant Directorates to focus on existing INTERPOL regions. We also created a new Assistant Directorate to focus on the North African and Middle

East Region. Terrorists and international criminals must find no weak links in our international chain of police communication. But we need each country's commitment to use our systems and to fill our databases. There are still too many gaps in our knowledge, gaps that exist because many countries have not seen INTERPOL as relevant to their needs or because many countries consider INTERPOL too slow. INTERPOL is more efficient and responsive this year than it was last year, but there is still much more to be done.

While it is impossible to create priorities for all of our 178 member countries, we have established certain substantive areas of crime on which Headquarters will focus its efforts. These are Public Security and Terrorism; Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking; High-Tech and Financial Crime; Illegal Trafficking in Human Beings; and Fugitive Hunting. You will learn more about these Assistant Directorates later.

Recognizing the importance of our databases; the collection, processing and transmission of messages and the issuance of Notices, we have created a new Directorate called Operational Police Support; it is the Headquarters Emergency Room; it is there that we will ensure our 24-hour service and improve our issuance of notices.

As promised we elevated the police function at INTERPOL by creating the position of Executive Director; placing the Executive Director in charge of three Directorates: Specialized Crimes; Operational Police Support and Regional and National Police Services. The Executive Director is now the second highest ranking person at INTERPOL Headquarters.

In addition, we boosted the importance of communications within INTERPOL and with the public. We established an office of Communications and increased the importance of our Web page. Let me give you an idea of the future role of Web communications and the significant role that INTERPOL plays in the world's eyes. Since 11 September, 2001 INTERPOL's Web page has had over three million visitors. That represents over 100 times more readers than all of the issues of the International Police Review published in INTERPOL's 78-year history. We are new to this and not all of our member countries are in a position to take advantage of our Web page communications, but our goal is to make all 178 member countries Internet accessible.

INTERPOL can't succeed without additional resources. We promised to explore the private sector for additional resources. We have hired a fund-raiser for that purpose. Already this initiative has borne fruit.

These important initiatives are under the responsibility of my Director of Cabinet.

During the African Regional Conference, we promised that if countries were able to establish Internet access, we would find the equipment to give them. Just this month, the Credit Card issuing companies agreed in principle to provide INTERPOL member countries with modern computer equipment that is being replaced by their companies.

We have made reinforcing our relationship with Europol a high priority. My first official mission as Secretary General was to Europol. Juergen Storbeck, who is here with us, and I committed to having a proposed Memorandum of Understanding ready for your consideration during this General Assembly. We have done so; moreover, I have hired as my Chief of Staff an Italian police officer who served 7 years at Europol. She is the first female Director in the history of INTERPOL. Recruiting her from Europol signals that in the future an international police career could include tours of duty in INTERPOL and Europol as well as in other regional police organizations.

The resolution that you will receive later for consideration will propose that we establish a new database that will directly help in the detection and hopefully prevention of future successful terrorist attacks. We will create, with your support, an international database of stolen, counterfeit or forged identify documents. We will ask the private sector to help us make our system state of the art, permitting the computerized querying of databases using Internet technology. These databases should be accessible by national and local police as well as to immigration and border guards. This will help police who query this intelligence obtain immediate information regarding suspects.

The resolution will propose that the General Secretariat make the issuance of Red Notices for terrorists the highest priority. In the future, the idea of creating an international arrest warrant database which goes beyond INTERPOL's notices and links together all countries' arrest warrant databases could also be explored. A simple query to INTERPOL will connect that request with all countries that maintain systems of outstanding arrest warrants. With your support, we will contact experts from private technology companies to help design such a system.

Also, we should consider establishing an international database of images of dangerous weapons that are seized by police, immigration and customs officers. At airports images could be taken and entered into worldwide databases managed by INTERPOL. These images can be used to prevent the carrying of such weapons on planes and can help in ordinary investigations of criminal conduct by establishing links among individuals and weapons.

In addition, the ability to disguise such weapons creates threats to our citizens and police officers. What shows up in Hong Kong or Havana will also likely show up in Budapest or New Bangladesh. The ability to quickly see what criminals are doing will make us more vigilant and safer.

Since becoming Secretary General, I have focussed much of my time on improving our system of notices. Our notices processes take too long and are painfully inefficient. We are committed to reducing the time from months to days. In addition, I want us to consider establishing a new notice, especially for terrorism related crimes. We could provide nations the formats for completion and if correctly requested, we would issue them within 24 hours.

Let me turn now to an important area where we need dramatic improvement.

The terrorist acts, or more accurately the criminal acts of 11 September, exposed weaknesses in our communication ability, our organizational effectiveness and our resources. As you know the communication system currently in place in INTERPOL NCBs worldwide is antiquated, clumsy to use, limited in its options and difficult to repair. Internet and Internet technology has passed us by. Our Atlas project is designed to address these weaknesses and greatly improve our technological capability; it should be fully implemented in 2003. Until then we need to find ways to improve our interim response.

These ideas are intended to provoke you to think broadly on improvements we might make. However, our Agenda for this conference is extremely relevant to how INTERPOL responds not only to the events of 11 September but to all serious crime worldwide.

Let me give you just a few examples.

One of our first orders of business will be to change INTERPOL's contributions or dues system. This is an issue that I have been working on since 1997 when first asked by the Organization to conduct a financial study for INTERPOL. The new system that will be proposed for your adoption is fairer and will ensure that the funding comes from those most able to bear the cost. France, Japan, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Canada have stepped forward to help lift the burden from INTERPOL's poorer countries. But, of greater relative importance is Brazil's agreement to increase its dues by a significant percentage and the agreement of OECD and other member countries not to have their dues reduced. The list of countries to thank is long, and I especially want to thank the Group of Experts that helped us arrive at a final schedule of dues that is fairer.

The Executive Committee and its Sub-Committee on Finance led by Vice-President for Europe, John Abbott, have agreed that a one-time debt forgiveness plan is in order. This is a time when the world cannot afford to have certain INTERPOL countries in Article 52 status – that is, deprived of INTERPOL's full services. By the end of today, every country will be a full member, and no country will be in Article 52 status. We cannot afford to have any member country penalized. You are all equally important in this struggle against terrorism and serious crime. Thus, each country represented here will be able to vote on the Budapest resolution on terrorism that will be presented this week. In this regard I am pleased that Cuba is attending a General Assembly after many years of absence. It was during a regional conference of

the Caribbean Chiefs of Police that I met with the delegation from Cuba and asked them to return to INTERPOL's conferences and General Assemblies. We are happy to have you back!

A new application for membership will also be considered. Yugoslavia's application will give it an opportunity to express support for international police co-operation and for INTERPOL's Constitution.

Most items on the agenda are intended to strengthen the international police architecture of communication and co-operation. Addressing euro-counterfeiting and drugs will help to reduce the likelihood that these criminal areas contribute to the resources available to terrorists. The Atlas program, as I mentioned earlier, will improve our technology and thus our ability to communicate effectively. The memoranda of understanding, that I hope you will support, will break down barriers to organizations that must be our partners in the struggle against terrorism and other forms of international crime.

We will also address the approach we should take to police corruption. It is important to note that the billions of dollars, pounds, marks and yen that are being set aside for new programmes and approaches to fight terrorism can be undermined by one corrupt police official. INTERPOL must again take a leadership role in a difficult and extremely important area.

To carry out this agenda requires new partnerships and it will require more resources. Not new resources for a large bureaucracy in Lyon but resources for the NCBs to have the staff and technology available to use our systems. I have some thoughts for your consideration.

We must be creative in establishing partnerships. We have many observers here from other international organizations and private organizations. I would like to meet with you as a group to get your ideas. In this light, I would like to welcome the President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police who can be a voice of support for INTERPOL and its objectives. Scheduling conflicts in the past have precluded the participation of this important organization and it is good to have you back. One agenda item for this special meeting will be a proposal to host a meeting in Lyon within the next 120 days of all relevant organizations, to craft an agenda that looks beyond the INTERPOL family. We cannot succeed alone... none of us can prevail alone. I also would like to meet with the exhibitors to collect their ideas. The loss to the world economy of the events of 11 September clearly require new private and public partnerships. We would fail our citizens if we did not take advantage of this General Assembly occurring less than two weeks following the horrific terrorist acts of 11 September.

Let me close with one last suggestion. I, like many of you, have been involved in trying to provide a police response to large public tragedies. The anger and the passion of the moment gradually fades. The commitments and the remorse are sometimes forgotten by governments but, of course, never forgotten by the families of the victims. Today, the world is addressing this problem with exceptional solidarity. I would like to make the following audacious request. Let's make 11 September a world holiday and day of remembrance to be recognized by all nations. However, this would be a day that would not simply commemorate the thousands of citizens from over 80 countries who perished or suffered on that date, it would also be a day for the world to renew that sense of solidarity and to make sure that the commitments we make in the aftermath of the tragedy are indeed carried out. That from these events we have moved to make our citizens safer, led by police professionals of all nations.

In closing, I appreciate your patience. A great deal has happened since we last met and a great deal is planned for when we leave this General Assembly. I remain confident that together we can make INTERPOL the premier police organization that the world expects.

Thank you and let's get to work.'