

38th INTERPOL European Regional Conference

Speech by [Ronald K. Noble](#), Secretary General ICPO-INTERPOL
San Marino, 27 May 2009

Their Excellencies, Honourable Secretaries of State,
INTERPOL President, Mr. Khoo Boon Hui,
Esteemed members of INTERPOL's Executive Committee,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you. It is a great pleasure to be here.

The final match of the UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) Champions League between Manchester United and Barcelona will be played in Rome tonight. It is tough to call, so I am going to predict that the winner will come from an [INTERPOL member country](#)!

Citizens of San Marino have among the longest life expectancies in the world, according to a report released last week by the World Health Organization.

I can tell you, having been here on three occasions, that each time I visit I feel more relaxed and energised, so it is no surprise that the people here enjoy such long lives or that the country is officially called the Most Serene Republic of San Marino.

It is said that San Marino is both the world's smallest country and its oldest. But I can see that neither of these has affected the scale of its ambition nor its openness to change through its hosting of this conference, which brings together more than 130 delegates from all but one of the 50 member countries in the region.

Let me recognise and thank our [President](#), Vice-President for Europe, and [Executive Committee](#) members from Russia, Norway, Turkey and the United States for participating in this important conference. Also with us today are the Chiefs of Police of Croatia, Czech Republic and Germany.

Mr. President, I do not know how you are able to discharge your duties as Commissioner of the Singapore Police Force and lead INTERPOL in your capacity as President, but on behalf of all of us, I genuinely thank you for your support and leadership.

I also see two candidates for the Executive Committee for the Asia region from Japan and Qatar. I know one person who 15 years ago attended his first European Regional Conference with the hopes of being elected to the Executive Committee at the following General Assembly in Rome. He eventually had the additional honour of becoming Secretary General. So, as long as you do not intend to run for Secretary General after being elected to the Executive Committee, I am sure this person would wish you good luck!

More than 20 years ago, King Juan Carlos of Spain told the United Nations General Assembly: "*Europe*



The web of associated crimes and illegal proceeds spans the globe – to fight it, we need to build strong partnerships and share information, said INTERPOL Secretary General Ronald K. Noble.

cannot confine itself to the cultivation of its own garden nor content itself with the preservation of an enviable quality of life, when other regions of the earth find themselves strangled [...]"

Still today, the countries here have shown that these are not mere words, but a philosophy that informs and influences all of your actions.

Europe is so important to INTERPOL in so many ways. You are our most active users and innovators; you are our most active supporters; and you are our most active critics. These qualities helped to create INTERPOL and help to keep INTERPOL strong.

I will use my remarks this morning to highlight the wide variety of ways that the European region is essential to INTERPOL.

One basic test of a region's support for INTERPOL is its willingness to invest in INTERPOL. Here, there is no region stronger than Europe.

With funding from the European Commission, INTERPOL has launched a border-management and migration initiative with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to modernise the communications capabilities of INTERPOL [National Central Bureaus](#) (NCB) in Cambodia and Vietnam, train staff, and extend access to INTERPOL services to international airports and border-crossing points in the two countries.

Following our joint success in the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the European Union is funding the "EU-INTERPOL: Support to INTERPOL in Central Asia" programme involving more than 50 remote sites in five countries in the region.

But an even greater test of a region's commitment to INTERPOL is whether it uses INTERPOL to reach out beyond the region in innovative ways that increase the participation of countries in other regions.

Last March, INTERPOL and Italian and Nigerian police forces officially launched a joint project to strengthen those countries' capacity to fight human trafficking and illegal immigration and the criminal organizations involved. Right now, five Nigerian police officers are working side-by-side with their Italian police colleagues, thanks to the willingness of two police chiefs to extend their hands across borders to help one another.

Illegal immigration affects many countries here, and innovative solutions like these which match resources with needs will significantly bolster your national and regional efforts. In a few minutes, you will hear from Mr. Ilkka Laitinen, the Executive Director of Frontex, the EU's external border agency, after which our two organizations will sign an agreement to strengthen co-operation in border-security activities.

Let me end this part of my remarks about the importance of Europe's funding INTERPOL initiatives and the importance of Europe's reaching out beyond the region with the example of [Project OASIS](#) being led by the former Commissioner of the [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#), Mr. Zack Zaccardelli.

In short, the funding and vision of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has enabled our OASIS initiative to carry out critical training and capacity-building programmes and expansion of access to INTERPOL databases in Africa. This helps both Europe and the rest of the world.

As these examples clearly demonstrate, INTERPOL needs Europe.

But some observers might ask for these same reasons, does Europe, with your highly developed police institutions and infrastructures and robust regional bodies, your abundant expertise and resources, really need INTERPOL anymore?

For law enforcement, we are in a constant battle against the same forces of globalisation that enabled a

single bank failure in one country to erupt into a full-blown global economic crisis and a single swine flu infection in another country to reach near-pandemic proportions.

Crime issues that originate in far corners of the world – that touch many regions – inevitably end up on our doorsteps, and this, to me, represents the true value of what INTERPOL offers to the countries of Europe.

There were 120 confirmed acts of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and near Somali waters in 2008. Forty percent of the world's merchant fleet flies a flag of a member of the European Union. Few countries in the region have been spared, either directly as victims of hijackings or through higher economic and social costs.

Two days from now, I will be meeting the Interior and Justice Ministers from the G8 countries to highlight the essential complementary role international law enforcement must play in dismantling the transnational organized groups behind these crimes, which occur in international waters but the proceeds from which finance other illegal activities that span the globe.

INTERPOL believes that if we are truly serious about tackling this crime, we must establish international protocols for handling detainees, taking and sharing their identity details, and setting up a multilateral task force that can effectively assist prosecutors and law enforcement. The military cannot do this alone. Police, through an international police organization like INTERPOL, can effectively fight this transnational crime.

At last year's [European Regional Conference in Vilnius](#), Lithuania, we identified so-called [Pink Panther](#) criminal groups involved in high-value robberies of jewellery stores in countries throughout the world as another area where INTERPOL could provide crucial support – and the results speak for themselves.

Just one week after INTERPOL co-organized a meeting in Monaco with investigators and case officers from 16 affected countries, a suspected ringleader of a Pink Panther group was arrested in Cyprus following intense co-operation between INTERPOL, several European countries and Japan. He had been wanted for his suspected involvement in robberies in Bahrain, Japan, Spain and the United Arab Emirates.

Earlier this month, we saw another arrest of a Pink Panther suspect in Paris, France, following a robbery in Monaco. How did this come about? As a result of excellent co-operation between the two countries' police, our NCBs and INTERPOL's Specialised Crimes unit at the General Secretariat headquarters in Lyon, France.

In a boost to global efforts to fight corruption, Austrian authorities continue to support us very strongly and just this month helped INTERPOL and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime chart a course for INTERPOL to lead the transition team for the opening of the world's first International [Anti-Corruption Academy](#).

When it opens next year, the Academy will be a part of INTERPOL. We are in the process of identifying funding sources, but it is our goal that in two years the world will have seen the need to create a freestanding, treaty-based International Anti-Corruption Academy funded and operating independently from INTERPOL, UNODC and Austria.

Through our Global Security Initiative for the 21st Century, we continue to move forward on creating an INTERPOL e-passport with state-of-the-art security features for Heads of NCBs, Executive Committee members and INTERPOL staff engaged in official business.

Today we will issue a formal worldwide call of interest inviting any company to join INTERPOL in this collaboration. As you know, we have one consortium of companies called EDAPS already committed to working with us and any other interested companies to bring about this much-needed step forward in the manner in which INTERPOL's officials are treated when they travel internationally.

We continue to develop and reinforce our databases and to roll out I-24/7 to more and more users. Many of your countries are integrating access to INTERPOL's databases into your own national systems.

As we do this, there is an even greater need for you and us at the General Secretariat to maintain and assure the quality and accuracy of the information that goes into our databases.

Indeed, as more external users will be able to search our databases and as the next generation of our criminal information system, I-Link, is fully implemented into I-24/7, we will need to consider what kind of information we want to put into our databases; what kind of hit alarms we want to generate; and how we can make it easier for users to differentiate automatic hit alarms generated from basic queries and from actual positive matches.

These questions cannot wait to be answered – we must do so now!

As more countries are operating MIND and FIND – including, so far, 19 countries in the region – it is becoming more crucial that NCBs have the 24-hour operational capability to respond to positive matches against INTERPOL's database of stolen and lost travel documents. This is especially true in Europe, which has seen more than two-thirds of the global total of hits this year – 5,634 hits out of 8,196 worldwide.

Obtaining a document holder's identification details as quickly as possible is essential when control officers at border entry points have minutes or even seconds to determine their next course of action after receiving a hit alarm.

Our systems are not always perfect, and valuable feedback like the input we received from Finland regarding Red Notices issued at the request of another country allows us to re-evaluate our policies and correct any problems we may have not foreseen.

In fact, your feedback is essential for us to improve as an organization and to maintain INTERPOL's fine reputation.

Let me give you a concrete example and in the process take a moment to single out for recognition our NCBs in Liechtenstein, Spain and Ukraine for working so quickly with the General Secretariat to help expose a problem of identity theft concerning Mr. Yuri Sidorenko, a Ukrainian national of Russian descent.

Ordinarily, we would not be able to use a person's name for fear of a lawsuit or violation of personal data laws, but Mr. Sidorenko has agreed for INTERPOL to use his name and this experience as a case study for the training of our [Command and Co-ordination Centre](#).

The theft by criminals of the personal data of an innocent person to create a fictional identity can lead prosecutors, police, NCBs and INTERPOL to waste their resources chasing a fictional person, confusing identities and harming the reputation of the person whose identity was stolen.

A false identification, a bad arrest, undermines all of our best efforts; it can destroy in seconds what takes years to build.

This is why we all must resolve to work harder to ensure the integrity of the information we share and to respond to requests from NCBs or the General Secretariat concerning a hit or a potential hit following a database query.

INTERPOL could not have exposed the criminal conspiracy concerning the theft of Mr. Yuri Sidorenko's identity and cleaned up our databases without the swift co-operation of our NCBs in Liechtenstein, Spain and Ukraine, for which we thank you.

These examples illustrate the importance of having our NCBs working closely with law enforcement components both inside and outside the country via INTERPOL.

The partnership between the European region and the rest of INTERPOL could not be stronger. The task before us during this conference is to ensure that this long and fruitful partnership will continue to strengthen and grow.

One very positive development is the swift appointment last month of Mr. Rob Wainwright as the new Director of Europol. Mr. Wainwright, who unfortunately could not join us today, has spoken publicly about the complementary roles of our two organizations. I have known and worked with Rob for years; he is an extraordinary professional and a fine individual. I am confident of renewed co-operation towards our common objectives.

Since our last conference, we have also benefitted from greater synergy with the EU with the appointment of Mr. Pierre Reuland, former Director General of Luxembourg Police Grand-Ducale, to the post of INTERPOL Special Representative to the European Union and the opening of a liaison office in Brussels. Pierre has proven to Europe and the world how INTERPOL can play a vital role in enhancing the co-operation of police regionally and globally.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, events and crises in other parts of the world directly affect us here. That is why it is not only our responsibility, but also in our own interests, to work towards fostering stability in areas suffering from crisis or recovering from conflicts. Police are a frequently overlooked but vital component of the stabilisation process.

Within this framework, INTERPOL has launched a new initiative with the UN and its Department for Peacekeeping Operations to enhance the role of police in peacekeeping operations and to augment the capacity of police personnel deployed worldwide.

I encourage all of you to discuss this important issue with the senior government officials in your countries and to inform them of the gathering of relevant Ministers that INTERPOL is organizing ahead of our General Assembly in October in Singapore. This ambitious effort is being led by our Director of the Office of Legal Affairs, Mr. Joël Sollier.

Regarding statutory contributions, given the current economic situation, we do not feel that we can ask our member countries to assume a greater financial burden, so it has been agreed that your budget contributions will not be raised for the year 2010, except for inflation.

I will leave you with a final thought from Antoine de St. Exupéry, whose name will no doubt be familiar to anyone here who has attended a conference at the INTERPOL General Secretariat.

The famous French pilot and author for whom Lyon's airport is named once said: *"As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it."*

Each and every one of us has the power right now to determine how our collective future will look. We are all gathered here with a full agenda ahead of us, the outcomes of which will set the course for INTERPOL's activities in Europe for the next year and beyond.

Let us make the most of these next three days.

I would like to close by thanking our hosts, especially the head of NCB San Marino, Mr. Maurizio Faraone, and his staff for all of their hard work in organizing this conference and their continued hospitality and professionalism throughout. I would also like to express my gratitude to INTERPOL's Executive Director of Police Services, Mr. Jean-Michel Louboutin, our Director of NCB and Regional Police Services, Ms. Julia Viedma Robles, and all of the INTERPOL staff for making this conference a success and for all of their hard work each and every day in support of the world's police.

Thank you.