

The other global crisis: Dangerous international criminals traveling the world

5th Heads of NCBs Conference

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Opening Speech by [Ronald K. Noble](#), Secretary General ICPO-INTERPOL

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Italy's Minister of Interior, the Honourable Roberto Maroni,
INTERPOL's President, Singapore Police Commissioner, Mr. Khoo Boon Hui,

Members of the dais,

Chiefs of police,

Members of the Executive Committee,

Heads of INTERPOL National Central Bureaus,

Dear colleagues from the INTERPOL General Secretariat,

Distinguished guests,

It is always a great pleasure to be here with you, the police professionals in our [National Central Bureaus](#) (NCBs) who give you all each and every day to help ensure the security of our citizens, our communities and the world we share.

The threat of [terrorism](#) is unfortunately a constant reminder to all of us why police and law enforcement are both so essential to keeping the world safer and are far, far too frequently the first to pay the ultimate sacrifice in the selfless defence of others.

We have just received news that five police officers were killed this morning in Lahore, Pakistan, defending a visiting Sri Lankan cricket team from terrorists, in what has been described as an attack similar to the one we saw [last November in Mumbai](#), India.

Both attacks – and so many others we have seen around the world – only reinforce why it is so crucial that INTERPOL has sent teams to support national authorities during major sporting events like the Cricket World Cup in the Caribbean, the Summer Olympics in Beijing and World Cup football championships. Attacks like these will heighten security concerns for all upcoming international sporting events and INTERPOL will be there, working side-by-side with national authorities, as we have always done. This has been part of our strategic vision for five years now.

Five years ago, a year after I first introduced the idea of 'the new INTERPOL' at our [General Assembly in Yaoundé](#), Cameroon, we formulated a clear vision of what INTERPOL stood for and what it should work towards in service to the world's police.

In the end, we came up with three [Core Functions](#) that, taken together, would form an effective



The world is facing a second global crisis, that of terrorists and criminal organizations, Secretary General Ronald K. Noble told delegates at the annual Conference for INTERPOL heads.

operational platform of services to better facilitate international police cooperation. These were: [secure global police communications](#), [databases and data services](#), and [operational police support](#).

At the heart of this vision stood – and still stands – you, our NCBs. During that General Assembly in 2002, I said: “The new INTERPOL is not simply a collection of databases and communication networks. The new INTERPOL is also human.”

Since then, we have never stopped building on this framework, making many, many sacrifices in the process.

Think about the efforts it took for our NCBs and staff here in Lyon to deploy our [I-24/7](#) system in all of our member countries, from the first country, Canada, in 2003, to the last, Somalia, in just four years.

Think about the efforts it took to create and build up our databases of stolen and lost travel documents, [fingerprints](#), [DNA profiles](#), [child sexual abuse](#) images and many others, from thousands of records to tens of millions today.

Think about the efforts it took for us to institute a 24-hour operational capacity with the creation of our [Command and Co-ordination Centre](#) or to streamline the notice-publication process – and for you to incorporate all of these enhancements into your daily operational activities.

We persevered in the face of sometimes daunting technical, financial and even psychological barriers.

Looking back now, it is impossible for me to imagine a time when police in any one country did not have the secure means to share crucial data with their colleagues anytime and anywhere in the world; or did not have at their fingertips centralised global databases filled with critical police data; or had to respond to a crisis of breathtaking proportions on their own, wondering if anyone else was aware of what was happening in their country.

These core functions – and our fourth, [police training and development](#), added in 2007 – remain as relevant today as they did when they were first conceived.

Late last July, three Iraqi nationals were intercepted at the international airport in Costa Rica. Before reaching the country, they had attempted to enter Guatemala but were refused entry and sent back to Costa Rica. They had travelled through at least two other countries towards their final destination, which was believed to be the United States.

INTERPOL is still helping police in the concerned countries determine how these three individuals made their way across the almost 13,000 kilometers that separate Iraq and Costa Rica, but one thing is certain: their journey was facilitated by the use of fraudulent passports.

This case is just one of 14 different organized crime-related smuggling cases involving Iraqi nationals travelling on fake passports in the last two years that INTERPOL is tracking. In these 14 cases, 74 passports from 10 different European countries were used, but only 24 had been recorded in INTERPOL's database of stolen and lost travel documents.

In one specific instance – one that shocks and worries me the most – in a three-month period, the same Iraqi citizen was stopped on three separate occasions carrying three different stolen passports from European countries.

While the evidence suggests those caught were traveling to seek asylum or a better way of life, it is disturbingly easy to imagine members of a terrorist cell using similar smuggling schemes to illegally transit through countries en route to commit acts of terror or other serious crimes.

Last week was the 16th anniversary of the first [World Trade Center terrorist bombing](#) in New York, an

attack whose mastermind used a stolen blank Iraqi passport to enter the country, where he claimed political asylum upon arrival.

In a different case that is still unfolding, we have reason to believe 12 suspected terrorists sought by Saudi Arabia have entered Iraq using their real names and identity documents. The fugitives were the subject of an [Orange Notice issued for 85 individuals](#) suspected of plotting attacks against Saudi Arabia from abroad.

All of us here know that even under the best of circumstances, police work is never easy. But it has indeed become much harder, because we currently face the most difficult financial conditions many of us have seen in our lifetimes.

I know some of you had to make tough decisions about whether to travel the great distance to be here. The fact that you did is a sign of your country's strong commitment to international police cooperation. You appreciate that it is not a luxury that can be easily dispensed with when budgets are tight.

The current economic turmoil began because governments and the private sector failed to heed clear warning signs that could have enabled us to avoid this crisis.

We cannot afford to make this same mistake twice where terrorism is concerned.

Last week, I wrote an open letter to world leaders calling for urgent and decisive action to respond to what I refer to as the 'other global crisis'.

Right now, more than 800 million international arrivals cross a border without having their passports screened against INTERPOL's global database of almost 10 million reported stolen and lost passports.

Right now, anyone caught trying to enter a country on a stolen or fraudulent passport is simply put on a return flight to their point of origin or allowed to continue on their journey without their fingerprints or real identities being checked against INTERPOL's database.

In the past months, countries have spent trillions of dollars attempting to rescue their economies. Yet, so far, there are no indications that world leaders are as committed to confronting a threat from terrorism using biological or nuclear weapons that would do far more harm to humanity and global prosperity than the current financial crisis.

The mobility of people and goods is the engine that drives the global economy. Enabling this movement while protecting our citizens from those who wish to harm us poses one of the greatest security challenges we face today.

It is also one of the most easily remedied with a combination of government resolve at the national level and multilateral law enforcement cooperation through you, our NCBs.

Many countries still have not implemented our [MIND/FIND](#) technical solutions and many more have not put them in place at the most crucial locations like airports, seaports and borders. The simple deployment of these innovations at border-control points has the power to expose terrorists, to expose wanted persons, to identify people smugglers, as in the Iraqi smuggling case I just described.

As countries struggle with the current financial crisis, we have to ensure that everyone at the highest levels of government understands that times like these require more, not fewer, resources for international policing, as emphasised just recently by our President, Mr. [Khoo Boon Hui](#).

I will travel to several countries in the Americas later this month to meet with top officials to reiterate these points. And I will do this again and again until these points are understood to be fundamental to and inseparable from our collective security.

In the meantime, the economic crisis means we all have to be prepared to do more with less. It means we will have to be more efficient, more effective and more creative to stay one step ahead of the criminals.

Looking back at the many positive developments over the past year, both substantial and subtle, I have no doubt that we will succeed.

Where most countries once considered escaped prisoners and other dangerous fugitives as strictly national concerns, last week, Côte d'Ivoire requested the issue of an [Orange Notice for 86 criminals](#) convicted of numerous serious offences who had broken out of prison. Since 2006, INTERPOL has monitored more than 60 such escapes in 43 countries. We found out about the majority of these incidents through monitoring open sources, so every request for an Orange Notice is a clear sign that our message is being heard.

Where counterfeiters in Asia once endangered the lives of millions by manufacturing fake pharmaceuticals with near impunity, coordinated action by INTERPOL and several NCBs in the region, which led to numerous arrests and seizures, has put them on alert that they will be pursued, they will be found and they will be prosecuted.

Where we once knew little about the organized criminals based in Europe responsible for multi-million-dollar robberies around the globe, increased information-sharing by police in Italy, Monaco, Japan and many other member countries has given us tremendous insight into the movements and activities of these so-called [Pink Panther gangs](#), which will better enable us to strike them before they strike again.

Where some of the most wanted drug lords in the Americas moved in and out of countries to elude capture, recent arrests facilitated by our NCBs in Colombia, the United States and Venezuela have made this option less and less viable for traffickers.

Where police in parts of Niger couldn't access INTERPOL databases because of the lack of electricity, they are now [using solar power](#) to conduct instant and direct checks of INTERPOL's stolen and lost travel documents database, shining light on even the most remote corners of the country where criminals might attempt to cross borders illegally.

It is rewarding and inspiring to look back on these and so many other successes over the past year that we can easily quantify – the number of notices issued, arrests made, drugs seized, sexually exploited children rescued.

But there are also a great many successes we cannot count but have far-reaching implications for INTERPOL.

Where getting our member countries to cooperate on sensitive terrorism investigations was once a major challenge, countries are increasingly sharing this information with the wider law enforcement community. I will meet with leaders in Pakistan immediately after this meeting to receive an update on their investigation related to the terrorist attacks last November in Mumbai. Years ago, this would have been thought impossible.

Where we once had to shout to be heard by world leaders, they now routinely engage INTERPOL, like [Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin](#), who addressed last year's General Assembly in St. Petersburg, the first head of government to do so in more than a decade. And we are so honoured to have Italy's Minister of Interior, Mr. Roberto Maroni, with us here today.

Where the dialogue about how to best protect us from terrorists has almost solely focused on the military, world leaders are now talking more about the vital role of law enforcement and INTERPOL in this effort.

We now have momentum on our side. Our task for the next three days is to identify how to best maintain and leverage this momentum.

Given the current circumstances, we do not feel that we can ask our member countries to take on a greater financial burden, so it has been agreed that your budget contributions will not be raised for the year 2010, except for inflation.

It is going to be challenging, but INTERPOL may be better prepared than most to weather this storm because we have always been a product of fiscal restraint. We were in essence built for this current financial climate.

In fact, a recent study by the noted Copenhagen Consensus Center group of economists concluded that every 1 US dollar spent on international co-operation through multilateral bodies like INTERPOL would generate 10 US dollars in security benefits.

INTERPOL can deliver the most cost-effective solutions to today's most pressing security challenges because we are perhaps the world's most flexible security apparatus, with the police in our streets, our NCBs and other national authorities in our [187 member countries](#), and all of us at the General Secretariat and in our regional offices – all working together.

In a few moments, we will witness the registration of a groundbreaking agreement between INTERPOL and Italian and Nigerian police forces to work together to strengthen their capacity to fight human trafficking and illegal immigration and the organizations behind these crimes. It is thanks to the vision and leadership of chiefs of police, Director-General of the Italian State Police, Mr. Antonio Manganelli, and Nigerian Inspector-General, Sir Mike Okiro, that this innovative approach has become a reality.

Our [OASIS programme](#) being supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has provided operational and analytical training to thousands of police officers in Africa. Again, there will be many successes we can count, but this is one greater, because it is an investment in the region's long-term security.

This year is especially critical for anti-corruption efforts and particularly our work on the joint [INTERPOL-UNODC Anti-Corruption Academy](#) being constructed outside Vienna, Austria. This unique institution, which will begin operations soon, will provide high-level instruction to law enforcement officers from all over the world and will enable us to make great strides in our collective fight against corruption, a crucial component of any endeavour to tackle terrorism, organized crime and other serious transnational crimes.

And we will continue working to better position ourselves to respond to existing and emerging threats through ongoing engagement with world leaders, the public and private sectors and other international organizations under our [Global Security Initiative](#) for the 21st Century, which is moving forward on innovative programmes related to cyber-security, secure borders and secure travel documents, anti-counterfeiting and anti-corruption.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I told you earlier that I could not imagine our world today without the tools and services INTERPOL has developed and refined in the framework of our four Core Functions. They have enabled us to achieve many great things over the past five years, and I believe that whether next year or 10 years from now, these tools and services will still be essential components of our collective security efforts.

In a few moments, INTERPOL's President, my good friend, Mr. Khoo, will talk in more detail about strategic planning, but this will help ensure that we will continue to serve you to the absolute best of our abilities, in the most efficient and effective way. Most importantly, this effort will ensure that we can continue to shape the future of the organization collectively so that all of our voices are heard.

INTERPOL will work closely with you, our NCBs, to make the world safer and more secure for one and all. With all of us working together, we can engender a virtuous cycle whereby success breeds success.

Thank you.