

## Intellectual Property Crime Training and Operation Workshops

Nairobi, 21 November 2008

Opening remarks by Mr. [Ronald K. Noble](#), INTERPOL Secretary General

Major General Mohammed Hussein Ali, Commissioner of the Kenya Police,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, it is a great pleasure to officially welcome all of you to these [IP Crime](#) Training and Operational Workshops. Your participation represents both the meaningful progress we have made collectively in fighting global counterfeiting and piracy so far and the foundation we are laying for even greater success in the future.

*"The evil of fake drugs is worse than the combined scourge of malaria and HIV/AIDS put together. [...] Anyone can be a victim."* These are the words of the director general of Nigeria's drug regulatory agency, Dr. Dora Akunyili, one of your continent's most formidable advocates in the battle against the criminals behind drug counterfeiting.

And she knows the challenges we face better than anyone, having worked on the frontlines for so long – having survived several attempts on her life and having had her offices firebombed by counterfeiters because of it – and finally having lost her own sister, a diabetic, because of fake insulin.

Indeed, countries throughout Africa have paid a heavy price because of the counterfeiting of medical products. According to the [World Health Organization](#), more than one million people die from malaria each year, the great majority of whom are children in Sub-Saharan Africa under the age of five, and fake anti-malarial drugs are believed to be responsible for a substantial number of these tragic deaths. In some parts of Africa, more than half the drugs sold are counterfeit.

Other transnational crime threats like terrorism get more newspaper headlines and attention from government, law enforcement and the public. But it may shock you – as it does me – to know that deaths attributed to counterfeit medicines far outnumber those caused by acts of terrorism globally.

Over the last 40 years, more than 65,000 people have been killed or injured in transnational terrorist incidents, while estimates of deaths caused by fake medicines range from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands annually. In China, almost 200,000 individuals died in a single year from fake medicines.

The crisis is not isolated to Africa or Asia. There are indications of an emerging and equally serious threat in other regions. The [European Commission](#) reported that customs agents intercepted 2.7 million packets of counterfeit drugs at European Union borders in 2006, up 384 per cent from just one year earlier.

And the situation only looks to worsen, as the current economic turmoil, rising drug costs and shrinking national health budgets suggest that more and more fake medicines could fall into the hands of consumers who go to online pharmacies or other countries in search of cheaper medicines. Climate change could well put parts of North America and Europe at risk for malaria, giving criminal networks an opportunity to expand the markets for fake anti-malarial treatments, which are some of the most frequently counterfeited drugs.

Our citizens and our communities face this very real danger because of the simple fact that counterfeiting is big business. The Center for Medicines in the Public Interest predicts global counterfeit drug sales will rise to 75 billion US dollars by 2010, an increase of more than 90 per cent in just five years.

Beyond the tragic human toll from counterfeiting, there are enormous economic consequences. The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) estimates companies lose more than 200 billion US dollars annually to counterfeiting, a sum bigger than the gross domestic products of about 150 national economies. Here in East Africa, intellectual property infringement costs the combined economies of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda as much as 20 million US dollars in lost tax revenue each year.

These costs I have laid out are staggering – but so are the potential rewards for more aggressively addressing this threat. Of the one million deaths from malaria each year, up to 200,000 could be prevented if the medicines were genuine. And that is only the figure for malaria – we may never really know the untold lives that could be saved if all counterfeit drugs were eliminated.

As law enforcement professionals, we are conditioned to treat every murder as unacceptable, yet insufficient action – on the part of governments, law enforcement, private industry and the public – is allowing counterfeiters to slowly and invisibly kill millions of our citizens.

A healthy society is a safe society, and a safe society is an economically robust one. If we are committed to keeping our societies safe, closing the wealth gap and stimulating truly global prosperity, we must do more to stop counterfeiting and we must not do it in a vacuum.

Your attendance here today means you appreciate the urgent threat counterfeiting poses to our citizens, our communities and our countries. The next step is to convince your governments and your police chiefs of the severity of the situation and the need for many more resources if we are to have any hope of beating the counterfeiters.

Together, we also need to educate the consumers in our countries about the true dangers of counterfeits. Consumers must be made aware that the essential products used to treat life-threatening illnesses, to feed our children and to keep our transportation systems running are widely counterfeited. But they must also know that the profits from the sales of fake luxury goods, multimedia items and other non-essential products are used to finance criminal networks' other activities. When it comes to counterfeiting, there is no such thing as a victimless crime.

While the counterfeiting of medical products is certainly the most cynical form of this type of crime, INTERPOL believes that it would be shortsighted – and self-defeating – not to address this phenomenon in all its manifestations. The modern organized criminal is like a commodities broker and will manipulate any commodity to generate significant profits. While there is some specialisation in types of counterfeiting, increasingly, there is evidence that the same people are involved in a wide variety of counterfeiting and piracy.

The scale and scope of this crime are immense, which is why we also need to secure greater involvement and commitment from all governments. The G-8 concluded at its meeting in 2007 that: "*The fight against product piracy and counterfeiting is a crucial element of criminal law, regulatory and economic policy as well as consumer protection.*" It urged national governments to enact the appropriate legislation to counter it and the police to enforce those laws.

Finally, we need to engender broader co-operation across agencies, sectors and borders, like the tremendous co-operation INTERPOL has enjoyed here in Africa. Operations conducted jointly by police, customs, regulatory bodies, affected industries, INTERPOL and the World Health Organization's [International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeiting Task Force](#) (IMPACT) in [Tanzania and Uganda](#) last September led to the seizures of medicines and closures of businesses that served as vital links in the chain that moved counterfeit drugs from factory to consumer.

We have achieved similarly notable results in South America and, recently, in Asia. I just returned from Cambodia, where I attended the final meeting for [Operation Storm](#), which was organized in the context of IMPACT to target distribution networks for counterfeit medical products in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. During the operation, millions of dollars' worth of counterfeit malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS medications was seized and numerous arrests were made.

IMPACT is an ambitious public-private initiative to develop regulatory, legislative, enforcement, communications and technological tools to combat counterfeit drugs globally, and is an essential complement to INTERPOL's work in this area.

Over the next few days, you will receive specific hands-on training that will enable you to conduct your own operations. You will then be able to share this knowledge with officers in your countries.

These workshops fall under INTERPOL's OASIS programme, which aims to build the capacity of law enforcement in the region by providing operational assistance, services and infrastructure support. OASIS is a completely new approach to addressing the complex challenges of fighting crime in the 21st century. It would not be possible without the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose generous financial support acknowledges that our best efforts to secure our own countries will be undone without a comprehensive strategy to enhance policing in all regions of the world. It is also an endorsement of INTERPOL's unique capability to provide the tools and services necessary to facilitate work at the global and regional levels to tackle pressing transnational crime issues like the ones at hand.

While these workshops are an excellent beginning, I want there to be no doubt that it will take significant time and resources to make headway against a criminal phenomenon that has become so endemic and widespread. This is why I sincerely hope that other countries, as well as bodies such as the European Union, will come forward and follow Germany's example by funding initiatives under the OASIS programme here in Africa and other regions of the world, so that INTERPOL can do more to assist you.

It is often said that a true measure of a society is how it treats its weakest members. The counterfeiters target the weakest members of our societies – the young, the sick, the economically disadvantaged – and as law enforcers it is our obligation to take action. So let us not waste another moment.

I would like to close by thanking the Kenyan authorities, especially Major General Mohammed Hussein Ali, Commissioner of the Kenya Police, for their hospitality and co-organization of these workshops. And thank you to all once again for joining us here in Nairobi. I wish you all continued success.