

Conference of parties to the UN Convention against transnational Organized Crime

Vienna, (Austria) 13 October 2008

Keynote speech by INTERPOL Secretary General [Ronald K. Noble](#)

Madame President
UNODC Executive Director Mr. Antonio Maria Costa,
Dear Delegates,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning

It is a real honour for me to be here with you today on the occasion of this Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.

As the Secretary General of the only global law enforcement organization, I am well placed to appreciate the extent of your task, the size and number of obstacles you face, the frustration that you sometimes feel, but also the ideals that you share and the sense of fulfilment that comes with the commitment of working for the common good, of helping the world's citizens to be safe from serious crime.

The paradox that we share is that, although global co-operation against transnational organized crime is not new, it still seems at times that we are constantly considering how to pioneer new approaches to fighting such crime. Together, you under the aegis of the [United Nations](#), and INTERPOL under the umbrella of its [National Central Bureaus](#) and law enforcement agencies from 187 member countries, we fight transnational organized crime based on the premise that to combat it effectively there needs to be a global approach as well as regional and national approaches.

Since I was first elected Secretary General in 2000, I have visited 120 of [INTERPOL's 187 member countries](#) and on every occasion I have emphasized the same message: in today's world, serious crime and terrorism not only cross borders, but are conceived, organized and carried out transnationally. As a consequence, law enforcement's efforts must adapt to the new global nature of serious crime and [terrorism](#) and we must find ways to integrate the work of policing entities at the national, regional and global level to constantly adapt to the ever changing nature of transnational organized crime.

This is what I call global policing for the 21st century and, dear Colleagues, all of us here today are pioneers in making it a reality.

I take it as very symbolic that as pioneers we are gathered here in Vienna because this city has a long history of breaking with old conceptions: Klimt with his time's academic style of painting, Freud with the idea of the clarity of conscience, Schönberg with the classical rules of harmony, and many others.

We, too, need to break with old conceptions. With one great difference though: we need to do this not to renew a certain form of art or self-understanding, but to provide our citizens with one of the most basic human rights, the right to security, especially security against transnational criminals who strike us and

then flee our jurisdiction or who with today's technology can strike us from afar without ever physically crossing our borders.

At INTERPOL we are committed to convincing our community — the global law enforcement community — that we need to fill a serious gap globally in our collective efforts to fight transnational organized crime.

I would like to take a few minutes today to focus on one specific aspect of transnational organized crime that we know constitutes a grave threat to all our societies — I am talking about corruption and those of you engaged in fighting human trafficking know how corrupt officials undermine your work.

Yes, we all have seen corruption rear its ugly head in many different forms. INTERPOL's 187 member countries have a variety of definitions for it. [Corruption](#) affects people all over the world, all forms of government and all sectors of society. Corruption fuels [organized crime](#), exacerbates income disparity, hampers sustainable development, undermines democracy and ultimately threatens our very social fabric.

If today a consensus is mounting to denounce and combat corruption, it is mainly because we are more aware of the real costs of corruption; that is, to what extent it affects our daily lives.

Executive Director Costa, this past April you said at the opening of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, that the rule of law, despite not being a Millennium Development Goal, was 'the key to achieving them all'. I could not agree more and I would buttress your point with the following observation: because corruption undermines the very foundation of the rule of law, we must commit ourselves collectively to fighting corruption wherever it is found.

And here I would like to congratulate the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Executive Director Costa and all of you for your vision and commitment in drafting and implementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Through its provisions on corruption, the Convention became the first global instrument to fight corruption. Here again, you were pioneers – pioneers who opened up a brand new front for fighting corruption, which eventually led to the adoption of another Convention, independent from the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and entirely devoted to fighting corruption internationally, the UN Convention against Corruption.

It is this Convention, as well as the experience of our member countries in investigating and prosecuting corruption, that inspires INTERPOL's work in this area.

INTERPOL's main initiative in the field of anti-corruption is the creation of the INTERPOL – UNODC International Anti-Corruption Academy, right here in Vienna to which my friend Antonio Costa just referred.

Building on work accomplished with Austrian authorities during the past two years, INTERPOL has sealed a partnership agreement with UNODC, the agreement Mr Costa and I will sign this afternoon in a formal signing ceremony, to make this very important project a common endeavour.

Due to offer some classes in the autumn of 2009, the Academy will be the world's first educational institute dedicated exclusively to fighting corruption. It will provide law enforcement professionals, government officials and other students with cutting-edge and innovative anti-corruption education, training, investigative assistance and research.

It will also serve as a think tank to creatively address issues ranging from the creation of international standards for joint investigations to asset tracing and recovery and legislation development.

Finally, it will actually train and help member countries to track down, seize and recover the assets stolen and looted from governments around the world.

This major project is a clear demonstration of the importance of fighting corruption in INTERPOL's anti-crime efforts. In fact, anti-corruption has grown in significance to the point of becoming one of the Organization's six priority crime areas, along with [drugs](#) and organized crime, public safety and terrorism, fugitive investigations, [trafficking in human beings](#), and [financial and high-tech crime](#).

As such, it will be an important component of the strategy INTERPOL is devising to face today's challenges, which we call the [Global Security Initiative](#) for the 21st Century. This initiative, adopted by our [General Assembly in St Petersburg](#) last week, is a comprehensive strategy that seeks to engage our member countries on a new level of co-operation in confronting the global security challenges of today.

Within that strategy, anti-corruption is a key element in our commitment to build the capacity of police and other law enforcement agencies in our member countries. In this framework, the INTERPOL – UNODC International Anti-Corruption Academy will play a central role in enabling police and prosecutors worldwide to investigate and prosecute corruption, thus enforcing the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

I strongly believe, in the area of corruption like in many others, that the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and of INTERPOL are complementary.

As Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said last week during our Annual General Assembly in St Petersburg, we need to fight corruption 'by strengthening the international legal framework and putting barriers in place to hinder those attempting to launder assets derived from criminal activities'. In other words, fighting corruption effectively requires a legal framework and global law enforcement co-operation.

Considering our common mission and our respective areas of expertise and action, it is logical and necessary that INTERPOL and UNODC team up in fighting transnational organized crime in general and corruption in particular. The INTERPOL – UNODC International Anti-Corruption Academy will pave the way for more strategic partnerships between our two organizations.

Madame President,
Dear Colleagues,

In many respects we share the same ideal — we dream of stable democratic societies where the rule of law frames the pursuit of prosperity and sustainable development.

We share a similar vision — we approach transnational organized crime as a global phenomenon that needs to be combated with global instruments and initiatives.

We also share the same commitment — we do everything in our power to convince policy-makers and decision-makers that combating transnational organized crime from a global perspective is the right strategy for today's security challenges.

Let us be inspired by this city of new beginnings, and let us renew our joint commitment to fight transnational organized crime and corruption.

Thank you very much.