

INTERPOL launches its Global Security Initiative for the 21st century

77th General Assembly
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[Ronald K. Noble](#), INTERPOL Secretary General

Your Excellency, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin,
Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, Mr. Chaika,
Minister of the Interior, Mr. Nurgaliev,
Plenipotentiary Presidential Envoy to the Northwestern Federal District of the Russian Federation, Mr. Klebanov,
Director of the Russian Federal Drug Control Service, Mr. Ivanov,
Governor of St. Petersburg, Mrs. Matvienko,
Vice-Governor of St. Petersburg, Mr. Tikhonov,
Mr. Senior Vice-President, Vice Presidents and members of the Executive Committee,
Ministers,
Monsieur le Premier Président de la Cour des Comptes,
Members of the diplomatic corps,
Chiefs of police,
Heads of National Central Bureaus and national delegations,
Esteemed colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to bring [INTERPOL's 77th General Assembly](#) to St. Petersburg, the home of centuries of remarkable Russian history. We celebrate INTERPOL's 85th year here where the Hermitage traces civilization from the Stone Age to the present. This General Assembly is the largest in our history, with 153 member countries and 687 delegates present, as well as 31 observers. We are truly celebrating our 85th anniversary in the right way.

One cannot escape the thoughts of Tolstoy and the ultimate novel, *Anna Karenina*. That masterpiece has become embedded in our culture and has inspired the name of a principle which describes an endeavor in which a deficiency in any one of a number of factors dooms it to failure. Thus, a successful endeavor is one in which every last possible deficiency has been avoided.

This principle is clearly applicable to our current challenge to do all that must be done to ensure the success of police efforts in every nation in the struggle against terrorism and serious transnational crime.

As Monsignor Boccardo eloquently said in supporting the State of Vatican City's application to join INTERPOL: "Today, it is especially important to further international co-operation among police forces to



The need to unite and co-operate towards a common goal of making communities safer is greater than ever, INTERPOL Secretary General Ronald K. Noble told the General Assembly in his state of the organization address.



The ultimate defence against terrorism and containment of global crime is achievable if all nations commit the appropriate resources and join together to fight this threat, Mr Noble said.

guarantee the security of all.”

Mr. Prime Minister,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I doubt that any international gathering of police in modern times has faced more compelling challenges, more dangerous potential consequences for inaction or mistakes, or a greater need to unite and co-operate towards a common goal of making our communities safer.

Our planet is suffering from ills of unprecedented magnitude, including a vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation that threatens generation upon generation. Finding affordable, safe and clean forms of energy is crucial not only for economic stability and growth, but even for peace. Countries around the world are bracing themselves for an escalating crisis that imperils the very survival of our banking and financial systems as we know them. Military conflicts and other disputes that could reach the boiling point continue to consume the attention of governments, the media and the people of all nations.

Against this backdrop, one might be inclined to wrongly conclude that international police co-operation should not be high on any one country's agenda or high on the world agenda.

But police are often the first and last lines of defence between safety and danger. The challenges confronted by and the demands placed upon police at all levels have increased enormously over the years. What we need now more than ever is more, not less, engagement and commitment from the world's leaders.

Mr. Prime Minister, you spoke at Columbia University in New York City just after the second anniversary of the September 11 attacks. The words you used then still resonate with powerful significance for all of us here today. You told the world that – and I quote – *“Tragedies of this scale are turning points in history. They not only leave a trace in the memory, they fundamentally change and transform thinking, the system of reality and the way of life for entire peoples and nations.”*

I would add that this statement is without a doubt applicable to INTERPOL today. We have fundamentally transformed our thinking to keep pace with every major development over the last 85 years. INTERPOL has succeeded because we have stayed true to the basic premise set out by our founders: to enhance international police co-operation while fully respecting the sovereignty of each and every one of our [member countries](#).

This has enabled you, our member countries, since 1923 to work with us in function of your changing needs, capacities and willingness, making INTERPOL an organization of all times, and for all times, because INTERPOL will always be what our members want us to be.

This summer, an INTERPOL team went to Beijing to assist Chinese authorities with security during the successful [2008 Summer Olympics](#), while another INTERPOL team was in [the Philippines](#), in partnership with the [International Commission on Missing Persons](#), to help identify victims of the Typhoon Frank ferry disaster using the latest DNA techniques. They did not have fingerprints, they did not have dental records, so we had to use DNA, and INTERPOL was there to help.

In a [case that began in Norway](#), our second global public appeal for help in locating and identifying a child sexual abuser resulted in the arrest of the primary suspect in the United States, just 48 hours after the launch of the operation, thanks to close co-operation between our National Central Bureau in Washington, [US Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#) agents, the [US Justice Department](#), prosecutors and INTERPOL's specialised officers in Lyon, France. This case is no doubt close to the heart of Governor Valentina Matvienko, whose commitment to fighting child sexual abuse is well-known and respected worldwide. That same month, May, INTERPOL, with the assistance of police computer forensic experts from Australia and Singapore, completed its independent forensic examination of computers and

[hardware seized by Colombia](#) from a FARC terrorist camp. We assisted a member country in need of help in an anti-terrorist matter, even though we knew that we risked coming under attack by some that could view our independent findings as biased.

Some aspects of policing have changed much over the last 85 years.

A state-of-the-art global communications network, like our [I-24/7](#) system, that would enable police in our [187 member countries](#) to check global police databases and even track in real-time a dangerous fugitive, would have seemed like pure science fiction in 1923, but now has become a fundamental and universally recognised tool in international policing. This function is so vital that the State of Vatican City was connected to I-24/7 the very moment you unanimously approved its membership this morning.

The example of our host country for this General Assembly, Russia, is proof of this tool's enormous potential. Russia was one of the first countries to connect to I-24/7, in June 2003. Recognising the value of this tool, Russian authorities under the leadership of Minister of Interior Nurgaliev, have extended INTERPOL services via I-24/7 to 41 remote sites throughout the Russian Federation, including the office of the Prosecutor General – and I am pleased that Mr. Chaika is here with us today. Both Minister Nurgaliev and Prosecutor General Chaika have consistently supported INTERPOL and its efforts to extend its services to law enforcement throughout our member countries. This extension has led to a dramatic increase in Russia's use of INTERPOL databases, with the number of searches of our database of nominal information on criminals and terrorists conducted by the Russian Federation and NCB Moscow rising from less than 3,000 in 2003 to half a million in 2008. Let me repeat: from less than 3,000 to half a million in just five years.

Russia also conducts more searches of [INTERPOL's database](#) on stolen motor vehicles than any other member country. It knows that the theft of motor vehicles is not only a means for organized crime networks to make money, but also a potentially deadly tool for terrorists. As proof, we need look no further than Lebanon, where a truck laden with explosives used in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005 had been stolen in Japan; no further than France and Spain, where Basque terrorist group ETA has for decades used stolen vehicles to carry out attacks. The same is true in many other countries around the world. We all know this too well.

Our global database of stolen and lost travel documents – the most prized “weapon” for a terrorist – has grown from about 4,000 records submitted by 10 countries in 2002, to almost 16 million from 141 countries today. So far this year, countries have already conducted more than 56 million searches of the database, identifying more than 10,000 travel documents as suspect.

Through our chief anti-terrorism initiative, police in all of our member countries now have access to names and identifiers for more than 9,000 suspected terrorists, over four times more than in 2002 when it was launched. This will help our police to identify those individuals in need of special attention.

Each of these developments tells its own story of a more complex and interdependent world – a world in which law enforcement is continually challenged to devise innovative ways to protect citizens and disrupt the criminals that threaten our collective security through seamless coordination across borders; a world in which, in Prime Minister Putin's words, and I quote: *“Any unstable area ... may become a source of threats for people who live on the other side of the globe.”*

We know the strengths of the international community, but we must also honestly assess its weaknesses.

And we cannot deny that there are a number of crucial security gaps that require the urgent and personal attention of our world leaders if we are to successfully address them. I want to highlight those three that I consider the most critical and that we hope to address as part of our Global Security Initiative that we expect to launch this week.

First, today, crossing international borders is commonplace – there were more than 900 million international arrivals worldwide in 2007, and this number is expected to double by 2020. INTERPOL has the only global database on lost and stolen travel documents. Despite substantial growth in member countries' use of the database, we expect only 73 million searches for 2008. This means that the identity documents of more than 820 million international travelers are not subjected to even the most basic scrutiny – a simple verification to determine whether an individual entering a country is who he or she claims to be. On the other hand, international travelers are required to discard liquids, walk through metal detectors and are even submitted to pat-downs or strip searches. We all know how humiliating and invasive such searches can be.

So how can we justify our failing to screen the passports and identity documents of international travelers? Especially,

if you know that INTERPOL's technology permits such screening on a real-time basis anywhere in the world;
if you know that the [United Nations Security Council](#) and virtually every entity that has considered this issue have endorsed INTERPOL's stolen and lost travel documents database;
and we do know that terrorist and criminal use of stolen or lost travel documents greatly facilitated the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the murder of Commander Masoud in Afghanistan, the murder of former Serbian Prime Minister Djindic, and the activities of terrorists and serious criminals worldwide.

Second, an equally unacceptable situation is the lack of protocols to warn the international law enforcement community and citizens when dangerous criminals and terrorists escape from prison. For several years, INTERPOL has been urging its member countries to share information about dangerous escaped prisoners. This year, we witnessed what was perhaps one of most spectacular jailbreaks of all time when, in June, [a prison in Kandahar, Afghanistan](#), was attacked – yes, attacked – by the Taliban, freeing up to one thousand prisoners. Yet, no photographs and fingerprints of the escaped prisoners were available to help police identify and apprehend them. This is by no means an isolated event: in the past three years alone, INTERPOL has monitored 62 prison escapes in 43 countries involving more than 560 charged and convicted terrorists. INTERPOL knows that this deficiency could easily be solved if we demonstrate the will to do so.

Third, we all know that the problem of terrorism cannot be solved by the military alone. Last month, I visited INTERPOL's National Central Bureau in Kabul, Afghanistan, and I witnessed the excellent and courageous work of our colleagues from the Afghan National Police Force – but they do so at a great price, with an estimated 700 police officers killed in the line of duty in just the first six months of this year, including Lieutenant Colonel (Malalai) Kakar, one of the country's highest-ranking female police officers.

During my visit, the Afghan authorities agreed to work together with INTERPOL to put in place a national state-of-the-art system to identify and track terrorists and other dangerous criminals. It is critical that the Afghan police have the necessary tools and technology to effectively combat terrorism, because it is they who will be protecting the people of Afghanistan long after the international troops have gone home. Wrong choices are being made, with billions of dollars being poured into military operations in Afghanistan, while a simple police tool such as a fingerprinting and photographing system to identify terrorists is not even being funded.

So as you can see, the *Anna Karenina* principle holds true more than ever in our world: the slightest deficiency, a single weak link in our global security network could mean the difference between failure and success for us all.

And so it is here, now, that we find ourselves at a crossroads in the organization's history. One signpost points the way to the status quo; in other words, a road we have frequently traveled that is safe, predictable. The other signpost points towards a completely new path, one that is unfamiliar yet holds the promise of sustainable security.

But to successfully set out on this path for the future, our organization needs heads of state and government to rethink the role of international law enforcement in today's world, just as radically as INTERPOL's founders did 85 years ago.

And failure cannot be an option when the stakes are so high.

Mr. Prime Minister, I hope I have been able to properly demonstrate the vital role of police in improving global security through enhancing international police co-operation. I have identified extraordinary successes that INTERPOL, its [National Central Bureaus](#) and member countries' police forces have achieved in this regard over the last several years. But I have also identified the serious security gaps that place the citizens and businesses of your country, of your region and of the world that we share at risk.

I have seen with my own eyes the way that Russia has supported the work of INTERPOL during your tenure as President of the Russian Federation and under the stewardships of Ministers of Interior Gryzlov and Nurgaliev. Mr Nurgaliev is a proponent of multilateral police co-operation and an equally strong supporter of international police solidarity, a position I have heard him articulate eloquently during G8 ministerial meetings.

I have seen the significant increase in the participation of NCB Moscow under the leadership of the former and current Deputy Ministers of Interior, Andrei Novikov and Eugeny Shkolov; Police Major General Constantin Machabely, Russia's first Delegate for Europe on INTERPOL's Executive Committee; and the Head of NCB Moscow, Timur Lahkonin. I can say without fear of exaggeration that under your leadership the Russian Federation has become an essential partner in INTERPOL's efforts to improve the security of citizens worldwide.

This, our largest General Assembly ever, will go down as a defining moment in our history. We will be launching INTERPOL's Global Security Initiative for the 21st Century, a comprehensive strategy that seeks to engage world leaders about the crucial role of law enforcement in taking up the global security challenges of today.

As Secretary General, I have traveled to 120 INTERPOL member countries and participated as your Secretary General in regional meetings and conference, in Iran, in Syria, in Europe, in Asia, Africa and the Americas, indeed in all regions around the world. This has shaped my belief in the urgent need to shift the world's focus from the military to the police in dealing with terrorism and transnational organized crime.

But INTERPOL needs the world's leaders to champion this idea and elevate the attention given to the role of police in helping countries to contribute to global security.

INTERPOL needs the world's leaders to speak with the same fervor and commitment about the importance of INTERPOL's role in international police co-operation as they have done – and as they do – about the UN and the UN Security Council. The Security Council deals best with state actors. INTERPOL deals with non-state actors such as terrorists, organized criminals and other dangerous international criminals. Today's terrorism and crime challenges require a strong international crime-fighting body, one that can complement the UN's work.

Mr. Prime Minister,

I beseech you personally and all heads of state and government of INTERPOL's 187 member countries to act swiftly and decisively in supporting INTERPOL's Global Security Initiative for the 21st Century and the creation of a billion-euro fund to support INTERPOL's efforts to further strengthen international police co-operation, a fund that is voluntarily contributed to.

In other words, I urge that the global struggle against terrorism and serious international crime be

approached with the same passion and scope of commitment as nations around the world are demonstrating in solving the economic crisis currently confronting us. We must recognise that, without immediate action to correct the defects in global security, a bad situation could grow worse in an instant.

Many challenges facing humankind still seem beyond our reach. But, the ultimate defence against terrorism, the ultimate containment of global crime, is achievable. All nations must step up to commit the appropriate resources and join together to fight this grave threat to our citizens, our countries and our way of life.

I want to thank you for taking the time to be with us this morning. I also want to thank you, your government and the people of the Russian Federation, especially the citizens of St. Petersburg, for being such gracious hosts of our 77th General Assembly. Given the geographic and strategic importance of your country and the dedication of your law enforcement officials, I hope that our relationship will become even closer in the coming years.

Thank you.