

37th INTERPOL European Regional Conference

Vilnius, Lithuania, 28 – 30 May 2008

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

Lithuanian Prime Minister, the Honourable Gediminas KIRKILAS,
Lithuanian Interior Minister, the Honourable Regimantas CIUPAILA,
Lithuanian Police Commissioner, Mr Vizgirdas TELYCENAS,
Heads of delegations,
Heads of NCBS,
Esteemed colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to INTERPOL's [37th European Regional Conference](#).

Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of our Executive Committee and the 48 INTERPOL member countries in the European region and four observers gathered here, let me express my appreciation to the Lithuanian government, particularly the Ministry of the Interior, for hosting this event. For me, it is a great pleasure to be back here in the beautiful city of Vilnius.

It is most appropriate that I highlight during our European Regional Conference that this is INTERPOL's 85th anniversary. We first met 85 years ago right here in Europe, with representatives of 19 countries in attendance. We currently have [186 member countries](#). And INTERPOL continues to grow. This week, for example, we received official confirmation that the Holy See (Vatican City) will seek to become INTERPOL's 187th member country this year.

This year's conference is marked not only by its historical significance, but by the fact that we have the strong presence of our Executive Committee. Besides our Vice President for Europe, who is chairing this meeting, and our European Executive Committee members, we also have our Senior Vice President and Acting President from Chile representing the Americas region and our Vice President from Singapore representing the Asia and South Pacific region. As you know, this year we will elect a new INTERPOL President, and we could not have any two finer declared candidates than Mr Hererra Verdugo from Chile and Mr Khoo Boon Hui from Singapore. I encourage you to take this opportunity to meet them and get to know them better during this conference.

Globalisation today has created many opportunities for those who are law-abiding citizens, but also for transnational criminals, including terrorists. All nations are more interdependent than ever before. INTERPOL represents the ultimate opportunity for law enforcement co-operation between nations that may disagree on a number of political issues, but who need one another to combat [terrorism](#), [trafficking in human beings](#), [drugs](#), [crimes against children](#), [high-tech crime](#), and other transnational crimes that concern your citizens at the national and local level.



Enhancing security in the European region means working outside national borders, INTERPOL Secretary General Ronald K. Noble told the conference.

In this regard, [INTERPOL responded to Colombia's call](#) for independent expert forensic support to examine the contents of computers and hardware seized by Colombia during a raid on a FARC terrorist camp on 1 March 2008. How could we say 'no' to Colombia's request? I do not need to remind Europe that the FARC have carried out violent attacks that have killed or injured at least 17,000 innocent people. The FARC have carried out 190 massacres that have caused 1,170 deaths. During its 40-plus-year history of crime, the FARC have kidnapped and held hostage more than 12,500 people. For these reasons, the FARC have been declared a terrorist organization by the European Union.

Europe knows that the drugs trafficked in your streets are often facilitated by FARC. Europe knows that your terrorists have received training and support from the FARC. And Europe knows that your citizens have been murdered or still remain hostages in FARC-controlled camps in Colombia.

When Colombia's request arrived, we did not ask the Americas or Europe regions for experts to conduct the computer forensic examination because we knew of your historic, political and economic relations to the three countries involved in the dispute. To ensure independence, we went to the other side of the world and asked our police leaders from Australia and Singapore to identify computer forensic experts. We asked these experts to work out of their own offices to ensure greater independence. We made sure that they did not speak Spanish to avoid their being influenced by the contents of the computers and hardware that were being examined. And we included their experts' reports in our final report that we submitted to Colombian authorities without any editing.

As an organization we devoted more than 5,000 hours to ensure that [INTERPOL's Forensic Report on FARC Computers and Hardware Seized by Colombia](#) was a comprehensive and highly professional product. Just to give you some idea of the amount of work our experts and staff put into this effort: the seized computers and hardware contained 609.6 gigabytes of data, which in Word format equals 39.5 million pages. In order to break the 983 encrypted files, our experts ran 10 computers simultaneously, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for two straight weeks.

We also made clear that the accuracy and source of the user files contained in the eight seized FARC computer exhibits were and always have been outside the scope of INTERPOL's forensic examination. So our findings expressly did not address the allegations or tensions involving Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

We were particularly pleased when José Miguel Insulza, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, stated that he accepted completely INTERPOL's major finding that Colombian authorities had not tampered with the contents of the FARC computers following their seizure on 1 March 2008. To quote him, he said, '*Lo valida en su totalidad.*' 'It is valid in its totality.' This view was echoed by Javier Solana, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union. 'What INTERPOL said is that what exists in these hard disks, these documents, has not been manipulated,' Solana said. He added, 'This is good news for INTERPOL, and for everybody.'

Both INTERPOL and Javier Solana know that terrorist groups operating outside the European region are a real and present threat to the countries and citizens of the region.

To be certain, not everyone was happy with our independent and comprehensive report's findings that there had been no manipulation of the data contained in the user files of the seized FARC computers. Two of our member countries, Ecuador and Venezuela, have come out strongly against INTERPOL's findings even though we never mentioned either country's name except to say that we offered to meet – and still offer to meet – with their police leaders.

INTERPOL has not made and will not make any comment about any particular country or person named in those user files. INTERPOL knows that it would be unfair to reach any conclusions about guilt or innocence based **only** on the content of the user files in the seized FARC computer exhibits without the source and accuracy of such user files being closely examined in the context of a judicial process.

Our reputation for independence and professionalism is what makes the public trust INTERPOL in a way that benefits each and every one of our member countries. For example, earlier this month, Wayne Corliss was arrested in the United States just 48 hours and one minute after the launch of [Operation IDent](#), INTERPOL's public appeal for help in identifying a man who appeared in images of child sexual abuse found on the Internet. Prior to INTERPOL's global appeal, neither INTERPOL nor police in any of our member countries knew his nationality, his identity or his whereabouts.

The speed of the arrest would never have been possible if Canadian and Norwegian authorities had not forwarded to INTERPOL the images of abuse they had uncovered in their respective investigations **and** if the public did not trust INTERPOL as it does.

Similarly, when [Operation Vico](#) was launched last October, neither INTERPOL nor the world knew just how swiftly the media and the public would respond to a global appeal from INTERPOL for assistance. That operation, which was historic, took only 11 days to identify, locate and arrest a suspected child sex predator previously unknown to INTERPOL and the world. Operation IDent reduced the time from 11 days to 48 hours and one minute. We received our first lead within seven hours of launching the operation.

Because of INTERPOL's independence, its professionalism and our use of 21st-century tools, we are able to help European police services keep your citizens safer than they otherwise would be. For example, at this conference you will hear about how two countries' use of [INTERPOL's databases](#) helped us to expose a violent transnational organized crime ring involved in the armed robberies of jewellery stores in at least seven European countries and 14 countries outside the European region.

INTERPOL helped expose this Europe-based transnational crime group through urgent checks of 14 DNA profiles recovered from the scene of the jewellery store robbery – not in Europe – but in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, which revealed that two of the profiles matched ones in our database submitted by Liechtenstein. Working via our [National Central Bureaus](#) inside and outside of Europe, INTERPOL has now collected data on close to 180 suspects engaged in similar crimes in 21 countries worldwide under our 'Pink Panther' project.

The importance of Europe to INTERPOL cannot be overstated. Countries in the region are by far the most active contributors to INTERPOL databases. About 80 per cent of the records in our database of stolen and lost travel documents are contributed by European countries, as are 70 per cent of records on nominal data and 60 per cent for stolen motor vehicles.

The European region is also leading the way in the development and deployment of capacity-building initiatives in other regions of the world. Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has pledged funding of 23 million euros over four years to provide capacity-building, operational assistance and infrastructure support in Africa. The OASIS programme, one of the most ambitious initiatives in INTERPOL's history, is well underway. There are now 10 officers from African countries participating in the INTERPOL International Police Training Programme at the INTERPOL General Secretariat thanks to OASIS Africa.

With the European Commission's financial support, INTERPOL has almost completed the first phase of the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) initiative. Consequently, we have been expanding access to our [I-24/7](#) global police communications system to remote sites throughout Russia and Ukraine, putting INTERPOL tools and services directly into the hands of officers in the field.

Likewise, Stability Pact donors including Germany, Norway and Switzerland, as well as the United States, are financially supporting the deployment of INTERPOL's databases and services to border-control units in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia.

Countries in Europe were the first to implement [INTERPOL's MIND/FIND](#) technical solutions to expand

instant access to our stolen and lost travel documents database to officers in the field. These solutions are already operational in 11 member countries in Europe. The second country in Europe – the second country in the world – to implement MIND/FIND was Lithuania.

We do, however, need to do more in Europe and throughout the world to make sure that we screen all of the passports of international arrivals against INTERPOL's global database of stolen and lost travel documents. What I am about to share with you is going to shock you. Last year, we set a record for the number of times member countries searched our database – almost 20 million times. Yet, there remained over 850 million passengers travelling internationally who did not have their passports checked against INTERPOL's database. I repeat, 850 million international passengers did not have their passports checked against INTERPOL's global database.

It is no longer an option for European countries to allow travellers' passports to go unscreened. Europe remains the number one destination for law-abiding citizens – and a top destination for non-law-abiding individuals engaged in trafficking in humans, illicit drugs and dangerous goods.

We must also recognise that enhancing security in the European region often means working outside your borders. For example, within one 12-month period, INTERPOL dispatched three [Incident Response Teams](#) to assist authorities in West African countries with their investigations into record cocaine seizures. In all three cases, the shipments were suspected of being destined for the European market.

Within INTERPOL's European region, we also have an important sub-region: the European Union. The first recommendation unanimously adopted during our last European Regional Conference in Varna, Bulgaria, recommended that INTERPOL take 'concrete measures to increase INTERPOL's visibility at the European Union level.' I wanted to take just a moment to highlight one significant step that we will be taking in this regard in just a few days.

I am pleased to announce that Mr Pierre Reuland, former Directeur général de la Police Grand-Ducale of Luxembourg, will be seconded to INTERPOL from next month to explore – I repeat, explore – the feasibility of opening an INTERPOL Special Representative's office at the European Union in Brussels. We are especially thankful to Pierre for accepting this challenge and to Luxembourg for seconding Pierre at no expense to INTERPOL.

Each time we have identified a person to work physically at a location of particular strategic interest to us, such as Dr Ulrich Kersten at the United Nations or Herman Heijerman at Europol, we have seen clear and positive results. In fact, one of the requests from Colombia for assistance in its FARC-related investigation about which I spoke earlier came from Herman's contact with the Colombian National Police's liaison officer to Europol.

Finally, this will be the last European Regional Conference for my dear friends, Mr Francisco J. Aranda of Spain and Mr Fernand Koekelberg of Belgium, in their capacities as Executive Committee members. Both of their terms will expire at the upcoming General Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russia. I would like to say to both of you that it has been an honour to have had your strong support on the Executive Committee.

I also would like to express my gratitude to the members of the INTERPOL European Committee. Our many achievements in Europe would not have been possible without your guidance and input throughout the year.

As we celebrate INTERPOL's 85th anniversary, it is noteworthy to remember that transnational crime is not a new phenomenon in Europe. Professor Franz von Liszt of the University of Berlin once explained 'how criminal groups had been operating freely over several countries, including Germany, Austria, France and the UK.' Although this comment could have been made today, it was made way back in 1893, before INTERPOL was even born. So, as I stand before you 115 years after Professor von Liszt's comments and 85 years since the birth of INTERPOL, please remember that our struggle to keep Europe and its citizens safe from transnational criminals is never-ending. We need to remain focused, co-

ordinated and committed in order to keep transnational criminals and crime under control.

During this conference we will discuss ways in which INTERPOL and its member countries need you now more than ever. Our strategic vision is ambitious – but as we have proved over the last several years – achievable if we work together with the same focus and commitment that we have until now.

Mr Prime Minister, distinguished colleagues and my dedicated staff from the INTERPOL General Secretariat, thank you all for being here and, most of all, thank you for your continued support.

I wish you a productive conference and an enjoyable time in Vilnius.