

20th INTERPOL Asian Regional Conference

Hong Kong, China, 7 March 2008

Speech by Mr. KHOO Boon Hui - INTERPOL Vice President for Asia

Mr Ronald Noble, Secretary General, ICPO-INTERPOL

Mr Tang King-Shing, Commissioner of Police, Hong Kong Police Force

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning,

I am sure you will all agree with me that this conference has been a great success.

INTERPOL Regional Conferences are important events for our Organization. They provide us with an opportunity to hear your views and expectations on how our Organization can better support your policing needs not only nationally and regionally, but also globally. Your active participation here is crucial for our continued efforts to make INTERPOL ever more effective and relevant to national police forces.

Chairing my first regional conference as Vice President for our region was both professionally and personally rewarding. In the past three days, I gained many new insights, either during the formal presentations or informally during the breaks and social programs, especially in the diverse policing challenges we face and the ways in which we can jointly tackle them.

When we opened this conference two days ago, Secretary General Noble spoke about the need to increase the use of technology by police to fight today's complex forms of crime and terrorism. The right technology, combined with sound, traditional policing skills, will make a world of difference to the capabilities of all our police forces.

The development of the I-link system by INTERPOL is a positive step towards achieving this goal. This project is fundamental to INTERPOL's future. And I believe that I am not the only one at this conference who is looking forward to the day the system becomes fully operational.

However, the effectiveness of the I-link system will directly depend on the amount of police data we contribute to the different INTERPOL databases and the number of authorized police officers that will have access to it.

Here in Asia, we need to increase our contribution and actively use the different INTERPOL databases. Our recommendation to extend INTERPOL services to police on the frontline through the extension of the I-24/7 System beyond the NCBS or through MIND/FIND shows our willingness to address this issue in the Asian region. I commend all of you for this.

During the conference, we also discussed INTERPOL's activities against terrorism; trafficking in human beings; drugs and organized crime; and financial & high-tech crimes. The different presentations gave us an accurate view as to what is happening and what has been done on these crime areas in the different parts of our region. It also shows the need for all of us to work closely together and forge partnership to ensure an effective and integrated approach against international crimes.

The very reason we are here is because crime transcends national boundaries. It requires actions and solutions which can only be achieved by acting jointly at the regional level rather than at national level alone.

In fact, more than that, there is also a need to work beyond our own region. As clearly demonstrated by several case studies presented over the last two days, such as Project Pink Panther, which involved organized gangs traversing across Europe, Middle East and Asia, co-operation across different regions is critical in putting a stop to such transnational crimes. Not only does the exchange of information and intelligence solve trans-regional crimes, the exchange of expertise also increases the capacity of member countries to deal with emerging crime trends.

It is therefore important that, upon returning to our respective countries, we immediately start implementing the different recommendations we adopted during this conference against travelling sex offenders, cybercrimes and intellectual property crimes.

Our recommendations must not remain mere declarations of intent, but must lead to practical action at the national level. Indeed, at the very moment an INTERPOL regional conference or General Assembly ends, our work back home starts.

Apart from the knowledge we gained, this conference also allowed us to develop new friendships and strengthen existing relationships. I am confident that this will be as valuable as what we have learned. International police co-operation is more than institutions and mechanisms alone – personal relationships and mutual trust are equally critical aspects of our endeavors, and I sincerely believe that INTERPOL embodies that ideal of a global law enforcement brother and sisterhood.

As we conclude this 20 th INTERPOL Asian Regional Conference, let me say that fighting international crime involves a holistic and comprehensive approach by the global law enforcement community. New crime developments and emerging threats require strong and effective responses in the region and beyond. I am confident that INTERPOL will provide us with its utmost support in our efforts by ensuring that international co-operation between law enforcement agencies is translated into effective action on the ground.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Hong Kong Police Force, led by Commissioner Tang King-Shing, for the excellent arrangements for a successful conference and the wonderful hospitality as exemplified by last night's gala dinner. In particular, I am sure many of you would appreciate the exquisite name stamp they had prepared, which, although similar in looks actually has your name in Chinese characters. I think it is a fitting reminder that although we each face unique challenges in our operating environment, the public we serve expect us to be united in our common duty to fight crime.

In addition, I would also like to thank the interpreters, note takers, all members of the Conference's Organizing Committee, and each and everyone who contributed to making this event so useful and memorable for all of us. Mr Ronald Noble, our Secretary General, deserves a special mention for his visionary and dynamic leadership of INTERPOL.

Finally, to the conference delegates, I would like to thank you for attending this conference and for your support to INTERPOL.

I look forward to seeing you all at the 21 st INTERPOL Asian Regional Conference in Tehran in 2010. But I am sure we will have many other opportunities to meet, for example at the General Assembly in St Petersburg's in Oct this year and in Singapore next year.

I wish all of you a safe journey home.