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Keynote Speech by Secretary General Ronald K. Noble

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Europe's security architecture needs to function within a global context, INTERPOL Secretary General Ronald K. Noble told delegates.

Policing in the 21st Century: the INTERPOL Perspective

Honorable Ministers,
Members of Parliament,
Heads of Police and Distinguished Colleagues from Europe
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a pleasure to be here with you today to discuss our common endeavour to secure Europe and its citizens. And indeed it is a very good moment to do so. With the inclusion a little more than a month ago (21 December) of nine new states, the Schengen area now embraces 24 states and covers a huge territory of over four million square kilometres with a population of more than 400 million. As Vice-President Frattini stated, within this area, a person can now travel the 4,500 kilometres from Tallinn to Lisbon, or from Finland to Greece, without having to stop at a single border checkpoint. This mere possibility is a clear demonstration of the fact that the European ideal exists not just in words or ideas but is becoming more tangible year after year.

I would like to start today by giving you concrete examples of why I believe the European ideal and European security architecture need to function within a global security framework.

The first example concerns organized crime.

On 31 January 2006, four individuals committed an armed robbery in a jewelry store in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, leaving with over one million Swiss francs — approximately EUR 620,000 — of merchandise and cash. One suspect was arrested but managed to escape from the Vaduz prison on 19 July of the same year with the help of two men, one of whom is suspected of having taken part in the burglary.

Following these events and investigation by the Liechtenstein police, INTERPOL's National Central Bureau in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, issued diffusions — and later requested the issuance of INTERPOL Red Notices, or international wanted persons notices — for four individuals, three of them from Serbia and one from Croatia. The police provided photos, fingerprints and DNA profiles for each of the four wanted individuals.

The information that would help identify the wanted individuals was stored in INTERPOL's databases,

accessible by its 186 member countries — not only accessible by the Schengen countries.

Less than a year later, on 19 April 2007, INTERPOL received from the United Arab Emirates police fourteen DNA profiles in relation to an armed robbery in a jewelry store in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. They requested an urgent check against INTERPOL's DNA database.

Analysis conducted at the INTERPOL General Secretariat in Lyon, France, immediately revealed that two of the profiles sent by the United Arab Emirates matched those of two of the four men wanted by Liechtenstein for the robbery that had occurred on 31 January 2006. One other profile matched a profile from an unknown individual collected on the scene of a jewellery burglary committed on 22 April 2005 in Switzerland and shared with INTERPOL by the Swiss police. We thus knew that an international armed robbery ring was at work — and not only with European targets.

Further investigation conducted by INTERPOL in cooperation with several of its member countries revealed that all three individuals were part of an organized crime group, referred to as the Pink Panthers that specializes in jewelry burglaries which had already hit 17 countries in Europe and elsewhere. A dedicated working group has been set up to investigate the Pink Panthers group, and this group will meet again tomorrow at the INTERPOL headquarters in Lyon. Through sharing of information and coordination through INTERPOL channels, we are putting the pieces together and hopefully police will soon be able to dismantle this dangerous organized crime group.

One lesson to be learned is that without Europe and the Middle East sharing information globally, they would not have been able to solve local crimes as quickly.

The second example concerns people smuggling.

On 20 January 2007, 11 individuals arrived in Monterrey airport in Mexico on an Aero Mexico flight from Madrid, Spain. Eight of them were traveling on Cypriot passports and two on Polish passports. The 11th individual was an infant, traveling on her mother's passport.

A vigilant Mexican border officer became suspicious, not of the travel documents they presented, but of their reasons for visiting Mexico.

Checks against INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database were subsequently made which revealed that the eight Cypriot passports were part of a lot of 850 passports that had been stolen blank on 23 April 2003 from a government office in Nicosia, Cyprus, and recorded by Cyprus into the SLTD database on the same day four years before. The two Polish passports, on the other hand, were not registered as lost or stolen in INTERPOL's database.

Further investigation revealed that the 11 individuals were in fact Iraqis who were attempting to travel onwards to Tijuana, Mexico, and then cross into the United States illegally. Prior to their transit through Madrid, the 11 Iraqis had transited – separately or in small groups – through Turkey (by land) and then to Greece (by sea). From Greece, they flew to Madrid. Upon arrival there, they were given the altered Polish and stolen Cypriot passports.

Since each of these individuals was handed a passport in Madrid, little is known about the passports used for the first part of their journey. One of the 11 Iraqis stated she was initially given a French passport, which she had to return to the smugglers before being given the Cypriot passport.

In March 2007, (less than a year ago) INTERPOL brought together police investigators from Mexico, the United States, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Spain, and Turkey at INTERPOL, so they could meet directly to make quick progress in their investigations.

As a result of the investigators working together through INTERPOL, follow-up investigations into the people-smuggling network have been started in Poland, Spain and Greece. The investigation in Poland

has so far led to the arrest of eight people, charged with selling their own passports. One additional person remains in custody, suspected of having purchased several Polish passports from their legitimate bearers in the vicinity of Wroclaw. The individual is also suspected of having been in touch with Spanish members of the human smuggling ring, and Spanish and Polish authorities are continuing investigations into the trafficking ring that arranged the travel of these 11 Iraqis. Spain has identified at least two major suspects, which are currently under police surveillance and are believed to be in contact with the Polish suspect. The investigations in Poland and Spain continue.

In addition, thanks to this cooperation, border police, INTERPOL National Central Bureaus and other police investigators are now on alert for this modus operandi. In the following months after this case was brought to their attention, police in Madrid have stopped 14 additional Iraqis attempting to travel with fraudulent passports.

These two cases clearly demonstrate why European law enforcement must not only seek to integrate and enhance police cooperation within Europe alone, but must also work with police forces in all regions of the world through the global services and tools developed for you by INTERPOL.

Both of these cases involve the use of a global database; a global secure police communications system and INTERPOL's global network of 186 member countries' police services. In both cases, INTERPOL-coordinated cooperation involving specialized officers from its member countries allowed police to gather precious intelligence that today is helping law enforcement in all the concerned countries launch operations against criminals and terrorists.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is INTERPOL's perspective on 21st century policing.

Now if I look at the measures taken to secure the Schengen area, one is particularly important — the implementation of the Schengen Information System in all states who are part of the free movement area.

Among other databases, the Schengen Information System contains a lost, stolen and misappropriated identification documents database that is used to check incoming travellers' documents. I strongly believe that this database is one of European law enforcement's most important tools to fight organized crime and terrorism. We know organized crime needs fraudulently altered travel documents, and we know terrorists use them too — painful experience tells us that fraudulent, lost and stolen documents are often a criminal or a terrorist's most cherished weapon.

INTERPOL congratulates all Schengen countries for their contribution to and use of this database. The SIS system, and even more once its second generation is implemented, will be one of the key elements of Europe's security architecture for the 21st century.

INTERPOL has always taken the view that border security is a global endeavour that provides local benefits. The goal must therefore be to find a way to expand national and regional initiatives globally in a way that produces benefits to citizens and police at the local level. We have been working with our member countries, which of course include all European Union member states, to develop the global tools that we can put within fingertips of the police at the regional, national, state, and local level.

Schengen member states, and indeed all European states, need to ask themselves "how can we get access to data of non-Schengen countries' databases on stolen and lost passports" and "how can we give our data on stolen and lost passports to non-Schengen countries so they can help us locate them wherever in the world they might be used by terrorists and other dangerous criminals"?

The answer is from your global police organization: INTERPOL. This is not someone else's organization; it is yours, and European states have been among INTERPOL's strongest supporters and beneficiaries.

In 2002, we created the world's only global database of stolen and lost travel documents, which back

then contained only 3,900 documents provided by 10 countries. With the help of the European Commission and the European Union, six years later, it contains 14 million documents from 133 countries from all regions of the world.

In the past years, we have developed a technology, called MIND/FIND, enabling police officers in their stations of duty, and particularly at border crossings, with a single swipe or scan of the passport, to check a traveller's document instantly — in 3 to 4 seconds — against INTERPOL's global database and their own national or regional databases.

In Europe, this INTERPOL technology is currently operational in only five countries — Belgium, France, Lithuania, Spain, and Switzerland — and only two of these five countries — France and Switzerland — systematically check incoming travellers' documents at entry points. The latter is also expected to join the Schengen area in the course of this year. If we consider only the period from September to December 2007 — four months — INTERPOL's system triggered 207 hits at French borders, of which 140 — that is 68 per cent — were made on passports issued by non-Schengen states. In Switzerland, Swiss border officers encountered 283 hits on foreign passports during the last four months of 2007, 119 — that is 42 per cent — of which were issued by non-Schengen states.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that these numbers speak for themselves and tell us in yet another way that Europe's security architecture needs to function within a global security framework, one that will make every European country's security efforts start at the four corners of the world.

And this is precisely INTERPOL's mission.

It is INTERPOL's strong belief that the 21st century's security context requires all states to adopt a global perspective on serious crime and terrorism. And developing global tools such as the combination of INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database and the MIND/FIND system is one of INTERPOL's 21st century answers to this challenge.

But in order for a coherent global security framework to be built, we must accept that there should be a number of standard operating procedures established between ourselves. The global law enforcement community needs, among other things, to systematically share information about stolen and lost travel documents, to inform about escaped dangerous prisoners, to warn whenever dangerous criminals or terrorists are on the run.

And that discipline will pay off.

Let me give you just one last example.

On 18 November 1995, Germany requested INTERPOL to issue a Red "Wanted Persons" Notice for an Indian national, Mohan SINGH, wanted for murder. His whereabouts remained unknown until October 2006, when he presented himself under a false identity (Sucha SINGH) at the US Embassy in New Delhi, India to request an entry visa for the United States. This was 11 years later — long after the original police officers assigned to the case had moved on to other cases or retired.

Before issuing the visa, US authorities checked his fingerprints against INTERPOL's fingerprints database and found that they matched those on the INTERPOL Red Notice issued for Mohan SINGH 11 years earlier.

This case clearly demonstrates why global tools are indispensable and how their implementation throughout the world helps to arrest criminals and protect our citizens. The arrest of this charged murderer would not have been possible if Germany had not shared its information beyond Europe and if the United States had not been using INTERPOL's global tools outside of its own borders as part of its Standard Operating Procedure for providing security to its citizens in the 21st Century.

This is what I find most striking about this example — it shows the benefits at the local level of following standard operating procedures that are international and global in scope. First, Germany sought the arrest of a man for murder and decided to share this information with the global law enforcement community via INTERPOL — as all countries should. Second, the United States, when studying an application for an entry visa, checked the applicant's fingerprints against INTERPOL's global databases as all countries should.

I would like to insist on the fact that it is crucial to use INTERPOL channels to inform law enforcement worldwide about wanted fugitives. All too often, when a European Arrest Warrant is issued, it is not circulated to non-European countries. I believe that this is a gap in European and global security that can easily be closed through the adoption of a standard procedure to inform law enforcement worldwide whenever criminals wanted for serious crime violations and terrorists are on the run. Here, we don't need to reinvent the wheel. This procedure is already in place at the national and Schengen levels. But, as this last case clearly shows, the non-European level is also necessary. We owe it to our neighbours inside and outside Europe to warn them when dangerous criminal suspects wanted by us cannot be found.

Ladies and gentlemen, virtually all forms of serious crime — and of course terrorism — today need to be addressed with a global perspective. That is why we need to break down the artificial walls and borders that make it more difficult for police to investigate cases or to protect our borders.

I strongly encourage you to share information with your colleagues, inside and outside of Europe, using the global tools that INTERPOL developed for you.

I also want us to work more closely together to establish standard global operating procedures so to build global tripwires against criminals and terrorists.

We need to make sure our policemen are trained to understand and act in cooperation with the global law enforcement community.

We need to partner with the private sector to devise the best tools possible so that we don't fall behind criminals and terrorists, who constantly innovate to reach their ends.

I am aware that what I am calling for may be seen as a revolution in law enforcement. Actually, it is a logical extension to what police do each and every day at the local, state and national level. Unfortunately, consulting only the databases of one's country or one's region places that country and its citizens at an unnecessary security risk where dangerous criminals and terrorists can come from any place on the globe. In the 21st Century our police information architecture; our intelligence and our cooperation must be global in scope in order to keep you and your citizens safe at the local level.

This is INTERPOL's perspective!

Thank you very much.