

## Global Conference on Asian Organized Crime

Singapore, 23-24 January 2008

Welcome address by Mr Khoo Boon Hui Commissioner of the Singapore Police Force

*Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs;*

*Mr Ronald K. Noble, Secretary General of INTERPOL;*

*Distinguished speakers;*

*Ladies and Gentlemen;*

*Good morning:*

It is my pleasure to warmly welcome all of you to Singapore and to the INTERPOL Global Conference on Asian Organised Crime. It is indeed a great privilege for Singapore to co-host this inaugural conference with INTERPOL.

I am heartened to see so many countries represented here at this conference which has been aptly themed, "Combating Threats, Anticipating Challenges". This is in recognition of the threats that organised crime syndicates pose to our societies, and signifies the need and resolve to fight these threats.

Organised crime transcends boundaries and no country can be insulated from this scourge, including Singapore. We have, however, managed to keep organised crime at bay through the twin pillars of tough laws and effective enforcement. The fact that Singapore enjoys one of the lowest crime rates in the world pays tribute to the success of this formula.

In recent times, crime groups have evolved and begun taking on a more syndicated and transnational complexion. They leverage on technological advancements to commit sophisticated crimes and evade detection, making them more difficult to deal with. The degree of sophistication can be seen from the recent operation codenamed SOGA (short for SOccer GAMbling) which involved INTERPOL and several countries including Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

The operation was aimed at eradicating illegal football gambling activities in Asia, largely perpetuated by Asian organised crime groups and resulted in a total of 266 successful raids with 432 persons arrested and over USD\$680,000 of suspected crime proceeds confiscated or seized across seven countries. These syndicates had used computers to conduct their criminal activities, and hosted their activities on overseas servers so as to circumvent local legislations, hide evidence of their illicit activities and evade detection by law enforcement agencies. This operation underscores the need to be constantly equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to tackle the threats of organised crime and be prepared for any emerging trends.

Covered in this conference will be a wide variety of topics - drugs, human trafficking, gambling, triads, cyber crime and money laundering. This is to ensure that we cast the net wide enough to capture the many forms that organised crimes can take. Against the backdrop of globalisation, there will also be a



Commissioner of Singapore Police and INTERPOL's Vice-President for Asia Khoo Boon Hui said solidarity between countries is essential in combating organized crime.

session specially dedicated to international co-operation, because it is imperative that law enforcement agencies unite in solidarity, now more than ever, in our fight against organised crime.

These sessions have been carefully planned to ensure that discussions are comprehensive and useful to every one of you. I am sure we will all have much to learn from the expert speakers who will be sharing with us. At the same time, I encourage all of you to actively participate and contribute your experiences and best practices during the discussion sessions, for it is through diversity of opinions that we can conceive new ideas and strategies to tackle organised crime within our respective jurisdictions.

In closing, I am confident that this Asian Organised Crime Conference will strengthen our resolve to co-operate in the fight against organised crime. I now have the honour to invite on stage Mr Ronald K. Noble, Secretary General of INTERPOL, to deliver his opening address.

Thank you.