

15th International Forensic Science Symposium

Lyon, France, 23 – 26 October 2007

Opening Remarks by INTERPOL Secretary General [Ronald K. Noble](#)

It is my pleasure to welcome you as delegates to the 15th [Interpol International Forensic Science Symposium](#). This symposium differs slightly from other Interpol meetings in that it has its own organising committee, elected by you, who work with Interpol staff to develop the program.

The Committee was ably led by its chairman, Dr. James Robertson from the Australian Federal Police, and one of the world's most renowned forensic scientists. I would also like to mention the special contribution and hard work of Mr. Simon Dzidrovski from my staff at INTERPOL to make this conference happen.

Forensic science and investigation have become a central part of the criminal investigation process and of the justice system. Through the huge popularity of the media and television programs such as CSI, the microscope has been turned on forensic science in a much more public way. Forensic science has contributed to both the failures of the justice system and to its successes. The role of forensic science in correcting miscarriages of justice is well documented.

It has also played a prominent role in humanitarian areas with the identification of deceased in the [December 2004 South East Asia Tsunami](#) bringing this type of forensic work to the attention of a world wide audience.

Over the last 2 weeks INTERPOL has helped to draw the world's attention to how technology was used by an alleged child sex predator Christopher Paul NEIL labeled [Vico](#) because he was photographed sexually abusing young boys in Vietnam and Cambodia. Forensic science played an important role (a) in helping to identify Vico's real image, (b) in helping to prove that the images depicting him sexually abusing children had not been altered, (c) in determining the date and location of the sexual abuse and (d) in determining the content of computers used to store these images.

Within 24 hours of our issuing our public appeal for assistance, over 12,000 articles were published and television and Internet sites worldwide covered Operation Vico in large part because of the intrigue associated with Vico's swirling of his image to conceal his identity and law enforcement's unswirling of his image to help determine his identity. To the world, it did not matter whether it was easy to do or difficult to do. What mattered was the perception that real life forensic scientists had worked using their expertise, experience and technology to help bring an alleged child sex predator to justice.

Thanks to fictional television series like CSI, thanks to highly publicized cases like Operation Vico and thanks to the countless of investigations and prosecutions that you help to support at home and abroad, the world of forensic science is gaining greater and greater recognition worldwide and deservedly so.

In such a high-profile world, and with the pace of scientific advances, it is particularly challenging for the managers of forensic services to keep up to date with the current status of the very many areas of forensic endeavor. The Interpol International Forensic Symposium is organized in recognition that a regular forum is needed to bring together senior managers of forensic facilities from our [member countries](#) to facilitate:

the presentation of advances made in scientific methods in the three year period since the last symposium;

to provide a look into future forensic needs and advances;
to facilitate the exchange of information; and
to provide a forum for sharing ideas for future progress.

At this symposium, reports will be presented on 15 evidence categories, complemented by poster sessions in each area. Three thematic sessions will be held including consideration of international assistance in DVI and mass casualties.

Of particular note is that Interpol was pleased to provide the forum for the historic signing of a formal agreement between the key international forensic managers groups this last Sunday, 21 October.

I especially welcome the representatives of the four networks involved, bringing together forensic scientists and laboratories from the Americas, the Asia-Pacific region, and Europe. This agreement sees the creation of the International Forensic Strategic alliance or IFSA. I am sure you will all be able to remember the acronym in due course. This is a crucial development that will undoubtedly lead to new partnerships, mutual programs, increased training opportunities, and an impulse for the different regions to further develop their own forensic networks.

INTERPOL will support this important initiative, and there is great potential to use INTERPOL's [I-24/7](#) dashboard to disseminate outcomes and review papers of this conference, and to offer the IFSA with the possibility of using I-24/7 for communication purposes. Another important part of INTERPOL's role is to bring together colleagues from around the world to share experiences and knowledge, as well as build informal networks. This symposium does promise a wealth of information for delegates and plenty of opportunity for discussion of science.

For some time now I have been hammering away at the theme that we are in the 21st Century and that the tools and approaches available to us to both investigate and prosecute crime need to be adapted to the challenges criminals pose for us in this century. In this regard, I am a firm believer that, in the 21st Century, science and technologies will be leading many of our most important policing activities as well as the day-to-day work of police everywhere. The role to be played by science and technology must therefore be an integral part of our vision on policing in the future.

I noted that, later today, there will be a thematic session on the need to go "back to basics". We at INTERPOL have been focusing on the importance of basics in policing and in international police cooperation. So, I can only congratulate the symposium for putting this crucial facet of the complex discipline that is yours in the right perspective. Indeed, it reminds us as the world becomes more and more complex, it will require experts such as yourselves to be able to put science at the service of policing and at the service of society at large in a way that can be understood and appreciated.

Before closing, let me thank the coordinators of the evidence categories that have been developed for this symposium and the member countries who have prepared the evidence presentations. This body of work represents a wonderful forensic resource which is available through our website to everyone with an interest in forensic science. This would not have been possible without the work of many but in particular I wish to acknowledge Dr Niamh Nic Daéid who, once again, has coordinated the production of a CD of the presentations, thereby making sure that all here can continue to benefit from the outcomes and the work done in preparation for this conference.

Finally, let me conclude by saying that it is a particular honor for me to recognize the outstanding work done by your Chairman, Dr James Robertson, without whom this conference could not have happened. He has been a great voice of support for INTERPOL in the forensic science community and his high standards have benefited us all. He deserves our gratitude and in behalf of INTERPOL let me say that he has our utmost respect.

I wish you and all participants every success in the days ahead.

Thank you.