

19th Americas Regional Conference

Bogota, Colombia, 25-27 September 2007

Speech by Dr Carlos Holguín Sardi, Minister of the Interior

On behalf of Dr Alvaro Uribe Velez, President of the Republic of Colombia, I would like to warmly greet Mr [Ronald Noble](#), Secretary General of INTERPOL, and all the delegates and Heads of the region's [NCBs](#), and apologize for the President not being able to attend such an important event. I am sure you are all fully aware of the reasons.

I would like to emphasize how important it is to our national Government to hold this event, at which we have managed to bring together delegates from approximately 40 INTERPOL [member countries](#), and representatives of international organizations, all noted for their support for and commitment to the fight against organized crime.

It is abundantly clear that INTERPOL has become the main, essential tool for the authorities in Colombia and the rest of the world for effectively and firmly combating organized crime in all its forms.

The fight against transnational crime must continue ever stronger, with improved co-operation and through the specialized units and bodies such as INTERPOL, which have been established to combat it and reduce the space in which it is able to operate. It is also necessary to share more and better information to effectively combat the financing of [terrorism](#), to ensure the security of our international trade and the progress made as a result of increased foreign investment.

In 2004, through Law 906, we made significant progress by granting legal value to the red notices issued by INTERPOL. I remember that this process began with the visit of the then President of INTERPOL, Jesús Espigares Mira, who personally told President Alvaro Uribe of the importance of conceiving and implementing a project to grant legal value to INTERPOL's [red notices](#), since their importance and scope help the authorities in the different member countries to seek, locate and extradite dangerous criminals who, through their activities, can undermine the sovereignty and security of any nation. This important resource has enabled us to locate and extradite a large number of [fugitives](#) wanted by other countries via INTERPOL channels.

In Colombia and throughout the region, the real tyranny is terrorism and transnational organized crime, and we cannot provide them with resources that will allow them sanctuary and refuge, or ignore the fact that the threat is also to be found in the rate of crime and insecurity suffered by many of our major cities.

I shall take this opportunity to reiterate the thanks of the Colombian Government for the great work done by the INTERPOL General Secretariat to make the authorities in every country aware, through their National Central Bureaus, of the importance of using the Organization's tools to advance joint investigations, the extremely positive results of which have been acknowledged at every level.

I should also like to repeat the words of the distinguished Dr Maria Del Pilar about considering the importance to the progress of this meeting of sincerity when expressing our real needs. We should realize how the Organization directly responded to a need Colombia had in terms of international co-operation which I referred to earlier (red notices). I believe I am right in saying that this same legal vacuum exists in most INTERPOL member countries in the region; it is important that they learn from our experience. We

are ready to advise each country on the conception of projects you consider necessary to meet this need, and I am sure the INTERPOL General Secretariat will support this initiative.

This is a clear example of the importance of INTERPOL in guaranteeing the achievement of the goals our governments have set with regard to combating organized transnational crime. It would be unthinkable to set goals without involving such an important and effective organization as INTERPOL and even more unthinkable not to recognize the need for international co-operation to achieve those goals . The secret lies in being aware of what INTERPOL's representation means to each country, measuring the costs and benefits, and we will most certainly achieve greater effectiveness, better results and, above all, better relations between our countries.

With that I declare the [19th Americas Regional Conference](#) open here in Bogotá, Colombia, and I hope you enjoy our capital during your stay.