

19th Americas Regional Conference

Bogota, Colombia, 25-27 September 2007

Opening speech by [Ronald K. Noble](#) Secretary General ICPO-INTERPOL

Mr. Minister,
Distinguished Members of the DAS,
Members of INTERPOL's Executive Committee,
Distinguished representatives from Colombia,
Heads of Delegations and Heads of INTERPOL NCBs,
Colleagues from INTERPOL Americas region member countries, colleagues from NCB Bogota, and from the INTERPOL General Secretariat,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the [19th INTERPOL Americas Regional Conference](#).

Let me first express my gratitude to DAS, NCB Bogota, and the Colombian government for graciously hosting this important conference. It is my second time to Colombia as INTERPOL's Secretary General, and on behalf of all of us gathered here today, let me say that the warmth of the Colombian people is felt immediately upon one's arrival.

I also wish to thank Canada for its donation of financial grants for this event — thanks to your country's generosity, almost all member countries from the Americas region have been given an opportunity to be present with us today and participate in our work.

I have just visited Mexico, where I had the pleasure to meet with Mr. Genaro GARCIA LUNA, Secretary for Public Security and former INTERPOL Executive Committee delegate for the Americas, and Mr. Ricardo GUTIERREZ VARGAS, Head of the NCB Mexico – here today – to get a commitment for Mexican seconded police officers to our Sub-Regional Bureau in El Salvador and our General Secretariat in Lyon. I am happy to report that both were agreed to by Mr. GARCIA LUNA.

While in Mexico, I was thinking about the INTERPOL [Americas Regional Conference](#) that took place in Mexico City back in 2002, and I was struck by how different you, our member countries, are working through INTERPOL today as compared to just five years ago. It persuaded me that the theme of my remarks must be the speed and breadth of changes in demands on police, but also the opportunities for police nationally and internationally that these changes present.

In April 2002, when we met in Mexico, no country was yet connected to INTERPOL's secure global police communications system – [I-24/7](#). INTERPOL's 24-hour [Command and Coordination Center](#) had just been created at the INTERPOL General Secretariat and we were only beginning the process of developing new police [databases](#) and enhanced ways for police to access them. At the INTERPOL [General Assembly in Cameroon](#) that year, I told the delegates from our member countries that a 'new INTERPOL' was about to be born, an INTERPOL that would be more alert, more aggressive, more responsive, more pertinent for every day police work. But, neither I nor INTERPOL had proved anything to you in this regard back in 2002.

Five years later, no one who has first hand experience with INTERPOL would dispute that not only are we a 'new INTERPOL,' but in the 21st Century we must always be the 'New INTERPOL' if we are to remain relevant to the needs of our [member countries](#) and the citizens whom you are sworn to serve and protect.

The 21st century INTERPOL is a new INTERPOL for the ever-changing world in which we find ourselves. Today's world is globalized, it is a world of interconnected economies, where modern information technology has revolutionized the way we work, where the media feeds us non-stop with stories and questions about the crime threat confronting us and where the transport industry allows people and goods to move like never before.

And we have learned about the need to change the hard way, the brutal way. Until the dramatic events of September 11th 2001, no one can honestly say that the world truly appreciated the global terrorist threat confronting us. Right here in Colombia, the threat of FARC terrorists was understood prior to September 11, 2001, but even the importance of supporting Colombia's struggle against FARC became clearer to us all afterwards.

This post-September 11 world is a world in which so much more is possible on the part of criminals and on the part of police.

Let me give you just one example that makes the point of what is possible by working through INTERPOL in this century.

INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database was created in 2002 to fill an important gap in global security. Five years ago, we had 10 countries contributing about 3,000 stolen passports. Now, we have 128 countries contributing 15.8 million documents. Based on feedback from our NCBs about the needs of police at the borders, we went a step further and built a system enabling border officers to instantly compare a passport against our global database by simply scanning the machine-readable passport at the border.

More and more countries are now implementing this system. And the new INTERPOL, the 21 st century INTERPOL, did not focus only on the rich, large and powerful countries in making sure that these tools were accessible by our member countries. We focused on all countries, and we had an unexpected response from this new focus.

The security success of the 2007 [Cricket World Cup](#) stemmed from the fact that the Heads of Government, Ministers, Heads of Police and Heads of NCBs for 11 Caribbean countries hosting this event decided to implement INTERPOL's state-of-the-art border control system to screen the passports and passenger manifests for all visitors against INTERPOL's databases. We helped them do it, you helped them to do it; we sent a team there for 8 months; we brought the NCBs in the fold with us. It was just amazing to see first hand, which I did.

Since then, Chile has done so as well and the United States have expanded access to INTERPOL databases within the country. On 13 September, the US reported that it had given access to IPSPG databases to 1 million users from 18,000 law enforcement agencies exchanging more than 50 million messages each month.

Since the 12 countries currently operational in the Americas region have implemented the [MIND/FIND](#) technology, they have conducted over three million searches, resulting in no less than 497 hits!

Barbados, for example, conducted more than 900,000 searches, resulting in 163 hits – in just this year! Chile: for August alone the country conducted 7,725 searches resulting in 17 hits! Even one of the smallest countries in the region (Antigua and Barbuda) conducted almost one million searches during the same time period with 103 hits. Two of our Caribbean member countries are thus in the top 5 users - out of 186 member countries. This proves that anything is possible when working through INTERPOL!

My dear brothers and sisters from the Caribbean, you might not have won the 2007 Cricket World Cup, but you have won INTERPOL's 2007 World Border Security Cup that has just been created!

These impressive results are prime examples of INTERPOL's vision for the 21st century — making INTERPOL tools, which are the fruit of the cooperation of 186 member countries, operational for everyday policing in each and every country. As the Caribbean and Chilean examples show, this is no mere theory — it is an operational reality becoming more tangible each and every day.

(Let me take a moment to talk about leadership that we have received from our [President](#) and our [Executive Committee](#) and the important role they played in the transformation of INTERPOL. We have six out of 13 Executive Committee members attending this Americas Regional Conference, the largest number in the history of our organization. They are here because they care, and without their guidance and support nothing that we have achieved together would have been possible!)

Dear colleagues, the core of INTERPOL's vision for 21st century policing is about breaking with the minimalist expectations that are usually associated with international police cooperation. INTERPOL wants to break with past thinking that reduces international policing to the mere exchange of limited police information and a few ad-hoc training exchange programs.

But this is an uphill battle that requires a mentality change. Together, we have to work at dismantling the invisible wall that too often persists between national and international policing. We have to work at making INTERPOL an inherent reality for police officers in their everyday work everywhere in the world. This is indispensable to 21st century policing because the challenges that each of you face can no longer be constrained within national borders.

Examples here are endless.

1. Street gangs are an important problem everywhere in the Americas region. Gangs used to be a national, even local problem. Today, gang activity often spans over many countries and includes such transnational criminal activities as drug and arms trafficking. This week you will hear about the problem that the Maras are increasingly presenting to this region and how we can tackle this problem together.
2. Illegal immigration is another example. For example, INTERPOL is aware of one recent case where three Cubans, using stolen blank Venezuelan passports, were able to travel from Havana to Moscow, then to Stockholm, on to Brussels and finally to Cancun, from where they allegedly intended to illegally enter the United States. You will hear from the Command and Coordination Center on this and the broader threat that we see.
3. [Drug](#) trafficking has always been a transnational activity, but effective police work has led drug traffickers to increasingly turn to alternative transit regions, such as Western Africa, to deliver their merchandise to Europe where potential profits are significantly higher than in this region. You will hear about how one of our Incident Response Teams went to Africa to help member countries in Europe and Africa take down an organized crime drug trafficking group with roots right here in South America, but targeting Europe via Africa.
4. [Money laundering](#) continues to be of particular concern here, and thanks to the initiative of INTERPOL's staff and your contribution, you will hear about an initiative that will transform INTERPOL with the same force that I-24/7 and the Command and Coordination Center has transformed INTERPOL. It has a very complicated name that I cannot remember; so I just call it the [Superform](#); it will allow you to work money laundering cases and other cases using a structured, systematic and automated approach that would never have been possible just five years ago. It is a super initiative because the principles for facilitating your international investigative work can be applied beyond money laundering.
5. Finally, [intellectual property crime](#) is another crime area where international law enforcement coordination proves crucial. An INTERPOL-coordinated anti-counterfeiting operation called [Jupiter II](#) involving specialized police units and customs from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, in which fruitful cooperation was established with the private sector, led to the disruption of criminal gangs through the dismantling of a clandestine counterfeit CDs and DVDs factory, the

identification of trafficking routes and modus operandi, and the arrest of over 120 criminals, including four following the issuance of INTERPOL Red Notices. Operation Jupiter II also led to the seizure of over 170 [vehicles](#), of approximately 500,000 CDs and DVDs, and of important quantities of pharmaceuticals, including veterinarian and body building products, counterfeit clothing, and electronic equipment, to a total of approximately 30 million dollars of seized goods.

These are just four examples that clearly show how the traditional distinction between national and international policing has become obsolete.

And to dismantle the invisible wall between national and international policing, INTERPOL realized that it too, as a global organization, had to make changes in the way that we work. To adapt our Organization to the 21st century, we are creating the world's first Anti-Corruption Academy, which will open in a year and a half in Vienna.

We also are developing what we call 'Global and Regional Anti-Crime Centers'. These Centers, which will be developed around specific crime areas, will be flexible and dynamic crime fighting bodies that will develop partnerships with the private sector, bring together, for short periods of time, investigators throughout the world to look at targeted global crime investigations, and maintain a permanent training scheme allowing a large number of officers from our member countries to come to INTERPOL to learn new skills based on the knowledge, experience and technology of police in 186 countries.

These ambitious initiatives that we are pursuing together via INTERPOL, via our NCB's and Member Countries' police services will take us one more step towards realizing our vision for 21st century policing.

Thank you very much.