

## 19th African Regional Conference

Arusha, Tanzania, 11 July 2007

Opening speech by INTERPOL President [Jackie Selebi](#)

His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Tanzania  
Honourable Minister for Public Safety and Security  
Regional Commissioner of Arusha  
Inspector General of the Police of Tanzania  
Members of the Executive Committee  
Chiefs of police,  
Heads of delegations and Heads of NCBs,  
Distinguished guests,

Just yesterday INTERPOL connected its secure communications system in [Somalia](#). Somalia became the last country in Africa to be connected by satellite to a secure communications system by INTERPOL. The first one to be connected by satellite was Tanzania, so we chose Tanzania to be the place where we meet because here we started a process of connecting the police in Africa with a secure communications system.

It is therefore Tanzania that closes a chapter of our connection of all the police in Africa to a [secure communications system](#), which makes us able to trace the criminals, to trace whatever they have stolen, to trace money laundering, to trace everything that the criminals can do. We can do this through a secure communications system. It had to be Tanzania, so thank you for being the first ones.

I would first like to thank the Tanzanian government for hosting the [19th African Regional Conference](#). To the officers, men, and women of the Tanzanian National Police ably led by Inspector General of Police Mr. Mwema, INTERPOL wishes to express its gratitude for all your dedication and hard work in organizing this conference, which, I am convinced, will be a success.

Dear colleagues, your presence here under the umbrella of the world's only global police organization is very important. Our continent, Africa, is facing huge challenges, challenges that all of us must do everything in our power to address because we have the power, the courage and the determination to do so.

One of the challenges we are facing, and I am addressing this to the Inspector General of the Police of Tanzania, is a question of the illicit trade in arms in this region of the Great Lakes – one of the major problems that all of us as Africans is facing is a proliferation of small arms. Small arms that are in the hands of marauding groups, not state actors, but people who have this immense amount of [weapons](#) which they use to make our communities unsafe. I am raising this because under your leadership, Inspector General, that you lead us to work in such a way that we address the question of small arms in our continent, it is important.

We have started in certain parts of the country to deal with the issue of small arms, but I think it is now under your guidance and your leadership that we will be able to do this in a much more concerted and focused way, to rid our continent, to rid our regions, of the scourge of small arms. They destabilise African

communities. One of the challenges that we have is for us to work as a collective to co-operate not only by coming to conferences, not only by taking resolutions, but by active participation of the police in joint operations.

As I speak, somewhere in Namibia together with Angola, Botswana and Zimbabwe, these African police have come together on a project of importance, a project that seeks to deal with criminality in our region. That project is called 'Thabana Ntenyana'. It is a project where police work together outside of their boundaries, outside of their jurisdictions, in order to work together to focus their energies on a particular criminal activity. I think that all of our regions must be able to do this for us to make an advance towards dealing with the criminality that we face in our continent.

It is this reason and only this reason that makes us as INTERPOL open a new Sub-Regional Bureau in Yaoundé (Cameroon). It is meant to serve Central Africa; it is meant to make sure that police officers in that region also work together like those in Southern Africa, to work together on projects that are meant to address criminality. We need to do this in order to survive. As police organizations we need to work together, to co-operate together, to work in such a way that we make space for criminality to shrink by our activities on a daily basis.

There is a problem in West Africa, not only in West Africa but East Africa also: it is a question of illicit drugs. It is our responsibility – nobody else's – that we as police organizations must come together to address this because it creates problems. Not only does it destroy human beings, it destroys economies. It creates a second economy; it creates conditions for corruption within our organizations as police organizations. It creates conditions for corruption in broader society and other authorities such as governments. It is a matter that we need to address in earnest. To do it in such a way that we actually address this question, that is why I am happy that the Sub-Regional Bureau in Harare, for example, has come together and worked with the Sub-Regional Bureaus in Buenos Aires and others in Latin America, where the major source of these drugs come from, to work together – to say how is it as members of INTERPOL can we get together to address the source of these narcotic drugs from where they come from.

I am certain that in a short while they will do this with the countries in the East, whether it is Pakistan or Afghanistan in respect of [heroin](#) and other derivatives, to work together to keep these drugs out of our continent. It is a job that we need to do, and it is a job that we need to do without any hesitation. I am certain that in all of these things that we need to do, to build this international co-operation, you will find a good and very strong partner in INTERPOL. INTERPOL will be there to help with training, to help with new skills, to help to address these questions.

You have, at the [General Secretariat in Lyon](#), amongst the people that are working there, fine men and women, men and women who are driven by the desire to reduce criminality in the world, who are ready to do everything in their power so that they help us.

The fourth and one of the most dangerous things that we need to deal with is counterfeit pharmaceuticals. They endanger the lives of children, they endanger the lives of women, they endanger the lives of old men, they endanger the lives of all members of our community, because those that are driven by profit are ready to counterfeit real medicines for false medicines.

They found in our continent a market that they can exploit, a market that they can not only exploit in terms of finances but in the lives of our people. It is an area that we as police in Africa need to spend more time in this conference discussing, these questions. There are toxic medicines that are not used anywhere in the world, but they are able to export them to Africa because we have become guinea pigs. We need to do something about this, as police in Africa, to address the question of these counterfeit pharmaceuticals. It is not good for us; it is not good for the health of our people. We need to work together, we need to work with INTERPOL, in order to address the problems which are faced by African people.

Let me lastly say, police must be sustainable. We are meeting later this year in Morocco to discuss the direction the police of the world are going to take. One of the problems that we are facing is that unless

we substantially change the direction that we are taking in making contributions, financial contributions, to this, our organization, policing on a global level is not going to be sustainable.

I am saying that what we are doing at INTERPOL with the resources we have now is not sustainable. We will have to rethink how we organize ourselves in the near future, how we are going to make policing sustainable. Unless we do that, policing is not going to work.

You know, as I know, that all of you who are leading a policing organization, that when you go to the treasury and ask for more money they always say look for it somewhere in the baseline, so I understand that. But we ourselves – and I hope that as chiefs of police you will take this matter seriously – we need to make policing sustainable, we need to make our organization sustainable

I wish you good deliberating in this, your conference.

Thank you