

36th INTERPOL European Regional Conference

30 May to 1 June 2007, Varna, Bulgaria

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

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Honourable Deputy Minister of Interior Rumen Andreev,
Mr. Valentin Petrov, Head of Bulgarian National Police Service,
Mr. Veselin Petrov, Deputy Chief of Bulgarian National Police Service,
Dr. Rodolfo Ronconi, INTERPOL Vice-President for Europe,
Mr. Jean-Michel Louboutin, Executive Director of Police Services, INTERPOL,
Heads of Delegations and Heads of INTERPOL NCBs,
Colleagues from INTERPOL European region member countries and from the INTERPOL General Secretariat,
Distinguished guests,

Good morning,

It is my pleasure to welcome you here to the [36th INTERPOL European Regional Conference](#). Let me first express my gratitude to the Bulgarian government, particularly the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior and the National Police, for graciously hosting this important event.

Our INTERPOL family has grown since last year's European Regional Conference. Today, we welcome our colleagues from Montenegro and San Marino to their first European Regional Conference. But perhaps the most unique feature of this year's European conference is that for the first time in the history of our organization, *all* European countries – yes, 100 per cent – are attending and taking part in our important discussions. We also welcome Israel for the first time, not as an observer, but as a member of the European Regional Conference.

The current challenge: not WHAT we do, but HOW we do it

INTERPOL regional conferences are important events. Less formal and more operational than our [General Assemblies](#), regional conferences are instrumental in helping us improve our activities and increase our relevance to national and local policing.

More so than in other years, our discussions this year will be about shaping INTERPOL's future, a future that allows us to take the fight against crime and terrorism to the next level.

Structurally, we are adding corruption as our sixth priority crime area, and our efforts to establish the world's first [Anti-Corruption Academy](#) outside of Vienna, Austria, are well under way.

Progress achieved in delivering police services

In terms of helping you, our member country law enforcement services, we have been working very hard with our NCBs to bring the different INTERPOL [databases](#) and tools to those officers who most need it: investigators and border control officers.



Twenty-eight European member countries have already expanded the connection to [I-24/7](#) beyond their NCBs to more police officers throughout their countries, while 11 others are planning to do so in the near future.

In order to further expand access – beyond the investigative level out to the control of borders level – we have been rolling out the INTERPOL [MIND/FIND](#) systems, which allow law enforcement officers to instantly check INTERPOL's stolen and lost travel documents (SLTD) database at border entry and exit points.

Seventeen INTERPOL member countries have now implemented this, and more than 20 others are either testing or implementing MIND or FIND. This development has been so significant and exciting that during the [G-8 meeting of Justice and Interior Ministers](#) held in Munich, Germany, last week, the ministers encouraged all countries worldwide to put in place a verification system back home on a 24/7 basis to support INTERPOL's work in this area.

A major theme since I have been Secretary General has been to enhance international police co-operation by strengthening NCBs and by bringing more INTERPOL services and tools to police and law enforcement officers, wherever they work. In this regard, we are developing a new system that will enable specialised investigative units worldwide to directly query our databases. This system, formally called the Structured Communication and Response System (SCRS) but which I call our '[Super Form](#)', will allow sending queries and receiving responses automatically over the I-24/7 system. Once this system using the Super Form is in place, neither you nor we will need to retype the information manually, thereby increasing speed and efficiency while reducing errors. It will be the most significant development in how INTERPOL works since I-24/7 was first put in place in 2003. It will revolutionise the exchange of police information, because it will bring every investigator in the world within a click of a mouse to the wealth of police information that is available through INTERPOL's international channels.

Another area where we are bringing more INTERPOL services and tools to police investigators where they work involves our efforts to fight the [sexual abuse of children](#).

In the last four years, the INTERPOL Child Abuse Image Database (ICAID) has increased from 350,000 to more than 500,000 unique images, and has so far helped you and your law enforcement partners from 29 countries rescue 535 child sexual abuse victims. This is more than a fivefold increase from the number that had been rescued as recently as 2003.

Once again, our goal with this database is to give specialised investigators direct, automated and encrypted access to child abuse images, so they can work directly with the evidence of the crimes. The G-8 has fully endorsed and is partially financing our initiative to do so. Just recently, Norway committed EUR300,000 over the next two years to help us meet our funding objective without raising statutory contribution dues. By the end of 2007, three countries – Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom – will be connected to the pilot database. In 2008, more countries will be connected.

In addition to increasing the speed with which we get you information or with which you can send information using INTERPOL's network, we have been trying to expand the content of the information that you receive. Here we have a significant, if not an historic, development to report. INTERPOL now has access to two Europol Analytical Work Files. For the first time ever, our two organizations will be able to combine our information and intelligence to combat illegal trafficking of [cocaine](#) from South America to Europe and organized crime groups involved in large-scale burglary and other crimes. Europol's Deputy Director, Mariano Simancus, will tell us more about Europol and INTERPOL's co-operation later.

But perhaps one of INTERPOL's greatest strengths is its ability to identify and alert member countries about threats to the security of all INTERPOL member countries. In the past two years alone, INTERPOL became aware of at least 72 prison escapes involving more than 500 prisoners in 43 countries. These escapes included convicted and charged terrorists and other dangerous individuals. Unfortunately, the information about these escapes is not getting to you as fast as it should. INTERPOL's [Command and Co-ordination Centre](#) learns about these escapes through media monitoring. When we asked for names, photographs and fingerprints of the escapees, the response was almost always slow and incomplete.

In order to prevent giving dangerous escaped criminals an unacceptable opportunity to escape apprehension and cause further harm, we have been working towards developing a comprehensive protocol to warn the international police community when such an incident occurs, using our Command and Co-ordination Centre and our well-established notices and diffusions. During this conference, you will be asked to endorse a recommendation to establish specific fugitive investigation contact points within NCBs. This will enable police to detect and apprehend fleeing criminals at the earliest possible point.

Threats within the INTERPOL structure

In today's world it is often easier to see and accept threats that come from outside one's country or region. I have traveled to 109 member countries now as your Secretary General and have listened to your crime problems. In almost every instance the crime affecting you most is the crime that originates outside of your country. It has taken the threat posed by so-called home-grown [terrorists](#) to require all countries, not just those battling national terrorists, to look inside to see what structural problems might exacerbate this threat and to see how best to confront this threat.

INTERPOL as an organization has also come to realise that unless we change the paradigm of how we work, we risk imploding. We are at the point of bursting at the seams. Let me provide you with two examples:

Between 2000 and 2006, the number of annual checks in INTERPOL's nominal database increased nearly tenfold, from 81,034 to 703,000 searches. These increased searches led to increased hits, which increased the demands on INTERPOL to verify these hits.

Between 2000 and 2006, the number of [Red Notices](#) issued annually by INTERPOL nearly tripled, from 1,077 to 2,804, and the number of annual arrests of individuals who were subject to INTERPOL Red Notices or diffusions surged from 534 to 4,259, a 698 per cent increase. Throughout this entire period, INTERPOL's workforce handling notices just barely increased.

Last year at our [General Assembly in Brazil](#), we began to lay the groundwork for how we could change to adapt to the increasing demands without increasing your statutory contributions too much. During the Heads of NCB meeting in Lyon in March, we asked Leno Reiman, the head of the NCB in Estonia, to help us think about global anti-crime centres for specialised crime areas such as terrorism, [intellectual property crime](#), drugs, etc. We would change the current model for staffing and funding by seeking voluntary and private-sector contributions to pay for our own police officers.

Based on feedback from you at the Heads of NCB meeting, we are creating a fourth INTERPOL core function: providing training and capacity-building. Expanding Police Training and Development is an investment in INTERPOL's future, because it is the 'missing link' between the tools and support INTERPOL offers and the operational needs of local and national police.

But even before deciding to make training a fourth core function of INTERPOL, we have been working towards more police training. Just this month, I took part in the official opening of the INTERPOL Anti-Heroin Smuggling Training Centre. This initiative comes at a critical time. According to the UNODC, the production of heroin in Afghanistan has been rising dramatically in recent years, reaching upwards of 90 per cent of global production in 2006. This poses a grave and growing threat to the health and safety of people not only in Russia, not only in Europe, but throughout the world. This new centre is part of our answer and will provide comprehensive training in combating illegal drug trafficking to more than 2,000 officers a year from Central Asia. INTERPOL has given the centre direct access to I-24/7, enabling it to communicate directly with the General Secretariat and NCBs in our 186 member countries and ensuring that countries well beyond Russia and Central Asia benefit from its activities and gain access to intelligence on heroin smuggling. It should help all of us greatly in our efforts to curb this threat.

INTERPOL's ability to recognise and confront the internal threat it faces from increasing demands on the organization is fundamental to our meeting the needs of our NCBs and member countries' police.

So, please keep providing us with your feedback – good or bad – so we can continue to improve as an organization.

Leadership (Executive Committee and IEC)

Mr. Deputy Minister, dear colleagues, let me close by talking about leadership.

INTERPOL has been fortunate to have a strong, dedicated and able [Executive Committee](#) to lead us. The European region has been especially fortunate to have extraordinarily capable delegates from Spain, Germany and Russia. Leading the European region of INTERPOL on the Executive Committee has been Dr. Rodolfo Ronconi, whose term of office as Vice President for Europe will expire at the upcoming General Assembly in Marrakesh. Rodolfo, let me say how honoured I have been to work with you and to learn from you.

Let me also express my gratitude to the members of the INTERPOL European Committee (IEC) and its Chairman Petter Dyhre for your support. The IEC has been providing valuable advice to our organization. It has consistently provided high-quality recommendations about issues and operational developments in the European region and has, no doubt, helped make INTERPOL's European region what it is today: successful, dynamic and responsive to the needs of our member countries.

Mr Petter will be concluding his term as chair this year. He will be remembered for many things, but most especially for leading INTERPOL's European Regional Conference when matters beyond our control tested the organization's commitment to political independence.

Finally, let me thank you, the Heads of Police, Heads of Delegation and Heads of NCB for the leadership that you show back home and during INTERPOL conferences and meetings.

Mr Deputy Minister and dear colleagues, I wish you all a successful conference and an enjoyable stay in Varna.