

# Global Financial Crime Congress: Building synergies across agencies and sectors

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

Police General Prung Boonphadung, Assistant Commissioner General, Royal Thai Police,

Mr Akira Fujino, Representative, Regional Centre East and the Pacific, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,

Dear honoured guests,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to open this Global Financial Crime Congress. While this is the fourth Financial Crime Conference organized by INTERPOL, it is the first time that we are co-hosting the event with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as a Global Congress. This is not only an important action for INTERPOL and UNODC in strengthening our relationship, but also a significant step towards building bridges across agencies and to the private sector in our shared fight against international financial crime.

## The threat of financial crime

[Financial crime](#), though it receives far less attention from the media than violent crime, has a devastating impact on individuals, industries, governments and societies. It poses a serious national and international security threat, and provides the fuel for drug dealers, terrorists, illegal arms dealers, corrupt public officials and others to operate and expand their criminal enterprises.

Extraordinary advances in transportation, communication and technology have made the world a much smaller place. This 'smaller' world has made it easier for highly sophisticated criminal syndicates and for criminally inspired individuals to pursue a complex web of lucrative illegal activities worldwide.

This brings significant challenges that we need to confront individually and collectively.

## INTERPOL's role

Let me tell you a little about INTERPOL's role in helping countries confront these challenges. We have structured everything that we do by integrating three core functions.

First, INTERPOL has designed a secure global police communications system called [I-24/7](#), and we have put it in place in 185 of our [186 member countries](#). This allows our National Central Bureaus (NCBs), which are 100 percent staffed and controlled by the relevant countries where they are situated, to

exchange information or make inquiries about criminal organizations, individuals, cases and other criminal matters that they consider important.

Second, INTERPOL has developed [databases and data services](#) at the global level that both mirror and complement law enforcement-related databases that exist at the national level. These databases include [notices](#) of persons wanted for arrest or suspected of criminal activity, the names of individuals who have been or who are currently under investigation by one of our member countries. The databases also include [fingerprints](#), photos, [DNA profiles](#), stolen and lost passport numbers, addresses, telephone numbers, stolen motor vehicle numbers, images of crime scenes showing children being sexually exploited, etc. These law enforcement-related data help police determine whether individuals or entities of interest to them have been or are of interest to police somewhere in the world, help to rescue children and help bring the perpetrators of serious crime to justice.

Third and finally, we provide operational police support in a variety of areas. When emergencies, terrorist attacks, prison escapes, significant crimes or major international events posing a security risk occur, INTERPOL's 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week Command and Co-ordination Centre is available to ensure that the right information or the right request gets to the right NCB, to the right INTERPOL General Secretariat staff member, or to the right law enforcement entity in the world, on any given day and at any given time.

Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, I and INTERPOL made a commitment that the lights would never go out again at INTERPOL and they have not.

But we all know it is one thing to respond to emergencies, but it is quite another to anticipate, to prevent, and/or to reduce the likelihood that a serious crime or serious criminal conduct would occur or reoccur. Working to prevent crime or to reduce the impact of crime might appear less important or less urgent than responding to emergencies, but I assure you that it is equally important and no less urgent when one takes a longer-term view of the crime challenges confronting us all.

Prior to this year, INTERPOL had identified five priority crime areas in need of our concentration on their prevention and on reducing their impact on our citizens, businesses and society as a whole. They are public safety and terrorism, drugs and criminal organizations, trafficking in human beings and sexual abuse of children, fugitive investigation, and financial and high-tech crime, for my first six years as Secretary General. It is our goal to build Global Anti-Crime Centers to support five of these priority crime areas which will serve as the global focal points for collecting, exchanging and disseminating information, expertise, lessons learned and best practices, and for providing the integrated analysis function that is required to gain further knowledge and understanding of the subject crime areas.

In March of this year during INTERPOL's [Executive Committee](#) meeting, we proposed and the Executive Committee endorsed our adding corruption as our sixth priority crime area, and we are in the process of creating a global Anti-Corruption Academy for this crime area. I will talk more about this a little later.

Now, let me focus on [financial and high-tech crime](#). For many years, INTERPOL has launched or supported various initiatives that provide operational police support to international financial crime investigations.

In particular, INTERPOL has taken steps, with the support of our National Central Bureaus (NCBs), to enhance co-operation with specialised Financial Intelligence Units, Anti-Money Laundering Units, and other entities fighting financial crime.

Specifically, we have increased our efforts to help member countries initiate and coordinate international investigations involving money laundering, payment card fraud, the so-called West African fraud scheme, and Internet-related fraud, like 'phishing'. Investigations into financial crimes, perhaps more so than most other types of investigations, are usually very complex, require highly specialised skills and, when the crimes are Internet-based, they are never confined within the borders of any one single country.

Let me show you how INTERPOL assists our member countries in this regard. This example will take you from 2003 to the present.

In 2003, INTERPOL started collecting and analysing information on phishing investigations in different countries worldwide. Most of you know that phishing is the fraudulent acquisition of the personal data of an individual, such as name, address, username, passwords, account numbers, credit card details, social security numbers and so forth, through the use of a phony website that mimics one of an established company or financial institution. The experts in our Financial and High Tech Crime Unit realised that this phenomenon took on alarming proportions in some countries, and this led us to launch Operation GoldPhish in 2005.

INTERPOL member countries that were alerted by us immediately expressed their interest in working with and through INTERPOL to tackle this phenomenon. So what did we want to achieve?

- To provide a platform for investigators from countries where the money was stolen, from the countries through which the money was illegally transmitted and finally from countries where the money was received

- To gain a better understanding of how to trace and seize the stolen money

- To share information on new modus operandi and the masterminds behind the crimes in order to alert other INTERPOL member countries about this phenomenon and allow police to take preventive measures

- To co-ordinate phishing investigations on a global level

- To alert the public and business community

This joint initiative with our member countries produced results. For example, in 2006, the United States informed INTERPOL's Financial and High-Tech Crime Unit that the US was investigating phishing cases, and had identified leads to different countries in Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, amongst them was Egypt.

INTERPOL arranged contacts with the Egyptian authorities on behalf of US authorities to further the investigation. An operational meeting was organized by our Egyptian colleagues in Cairo involving INTERPOL and US authorities. Based on the operational and investigative information that was exchanged before, during and after the meeting, Egyptian authorities were able to arrest 47 individuals involved in phishing, both as mules and as masterminds behind the scams.

This was a relatively simple thing for INTERPOL to do, because the unique feature of our organization is that we and our member countries have a direct link to police forces in our 186 member countries. One call or message to an INTERPOL NCB in any one of our member countries can help identify a specific police unit or expert within that country, and help investigators find each other. This greatly helps in clearing cases and in avoiding duplication and waste of investigative resources.

Similar anti-phishing investigations, facilitated by Operation Goldphish, are currently ongoing in different parts of the world.

During the last Global Financial Crime Congress in March 2006 in Madrid, Spain, the delegates pointed out the need for awareness-building and cooperation; timely and secure exchange of information; creation of global databases and reference points for investigators; and training and capacity-building among the different stakeholders involved.

We have made significant progress in this regard since the Madrid meeting. In fact, we are currently developing the INTERPOL Money Laundering Automated Search Service ([IMLASS](#)), a system through

which money laundering investigators can compare their investigative data with criminal information collected all over the world. In a nutshell, this service is being designed to permit you to check more relevant information, and to get you and your counterparts around the world more relevant information in a faster, more structured way, without your having to waste a lot of time and without a lot of unnecessary human interference getting in the way.

Next year we plan to expand the coverage of IMLASS to our other priority crime areas, such as terrorism, child exploitation, drugs and high-tech crime, among others, and my colleagues plan to rename it the Structured Communication and Response System (SCRS). Knowing that we operate in four official languages and have 186 member countries, I prefer calling it something simple and easy like, 'INTERPOL's Super Form'.

With this high-end system, Financial Intelligence Units and Anti-Money Laundering Units throughout the world will be able to timely crosscheck their information on suspicious international transactions against the different INTERPOL databases, and will instantly receive notification if a name, passport, bank account, address or any other identifying information was previously reported to INTERPOL by any of our 186 countries.

I am confident that the Super Form will revolutionise the exchange of police information in the future, much in the same way that our secure global police communications system called I-24/7 already has revolutionised the way in which INTERPOL NCBs and member countries' police services exchange information. The Super Form and the worldwide network of NCBs and INTERPOL General Secretariat that back it up has the potential of bringing every investigator in the world within a click of a mouse to the wealth of police-related information that is available through INTERPOL's international channels.

## **Corruption**

Another related crime area in which INTERPOL has been increasingly active in recent years is corruption.

Nobody will dispute that corruption and financial crime are interrelated. It is estimated by the World Bank that over one trillion US dollars is implicated in corruption each year.

Besides being a financial crime that affects governments, businesses and individuals on a financial level, corruption also distorts the efficient allocation of resources and causes a raft of societal ills.

This is why INTERPOL is establishing corruption as our sixth priority crime area. And this is why INTERPOL is in the process of creating the world's first international anti-corruption academy.

INTERPOL can play a crucial role in education, training and capacity-building, and also on the operational level, both in terms of its traditional role in assisting investigations, and in helping countries recover assets that have been stolen by corrupt officials. With appropriate funding and support coming from the public and private sectors, INTERPOL teams, comprising experts in international law, finance, and law enforcement, can assist member countries, upon their request, in the investigation and recovery of assets.

Now is the right time to raise our anti-corruption efforts to the international level. With your support we can make this happen.

## **Conclusion**

INTERPOL will continue to raise awareness of the dangers of financial crime to our societies, continue to collect and disseminate best practices on international crime investigations, continue to foster co-operation within and between both the public and the private sectors.

Let me offer my sincere appreciation to UNODC, to UNCC, the Royal Thai Police and the Thai Anti-Money Laundering Office for the valuable support they have given to us while organizing this joint Global Congress here in Bangkok.

I look forward to a successful Congress.