

INTERPOL Regional Bioterrorism Prevention Workshop

19-21 March 2007, Muscat, Oman

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

Director General of Criminal Investigation Department and Head of NCB Muscat, Brigadier Suhail Amor Bait Fadhil,
Chairman of INTERPOL's Steering Committee on Bioterrorism Prevention, John Abbott,
Distinguished guests, police colleagues from NCBs and member country police services,
My dear colleagues from INTERPOL's General Secretariat,
Experts in law enforcement, health sciences, bio-safety, bio-security, and legal communities,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamu Aleikum – Peace be with you

This [Bioterrorism Prevention Workshop](#)'s facilitators and INTERPOL's Bioterrorism Prevention Unit staff have all noted the remarkable level of energy and involvement that you demonstrated during this workshop, but especially during the table-top exercise.

When one thinks of the language barrier that frequently exists in workshops conducted in multiple languages, one must consider your contribution as being truly exceptional.

Not only have you all been so very much engaged, but you have also demonstrated a keen ability to identify the issues and a strong interest in working together to discover the best ways of working through these novel issues.

Indeed, throughout this workshop, you have been extremely thoughtful, reflective and co-operative in seeking the necessary information and making the key decisions. And yet, at the same time, many of you expressed a broad variety of views, unafraid to disagree with one another and more than willing to engage in spirited debate.

Energy, involvement, pursuit of knowledge, sharing and debating diverse viewpoints – it has definitely been a productive workshop for you, for your facilitators and for INTERPOL's Bioterrorism Prevention Unit. You see, you are not the only ones that benefit as a result – all of us benefit.

But it is only a beginning.

The most important thing you should take from this workshop is a desire to carry on and extend the lessons you have learned here when you get back home – to share them with others; to continue the important work that needs to be done in the area of bioterrorism prevention and response.

You cannot do this alone, however.

You need support from your governments, from your leaders and from your colleagues. When INTERPOL started this journey back in 2004, we did not know whether you, our [member countries](#), would show the kind of interest that you have in working together to enhance our joint ability to prevent and respond to bioterrorism. But now we know.

The main purpose of this series of workshops has been first to raise your awareness as to the threat of [bioterrorism](#), and then to help lay the foundation for the work that remains to be done both by you and by us at the INTERPOL General Secretariat when we return home.

People often forget that INTERPOL is not some organization in some far away place. INTERPOL comprises you, your NCBs, your law enforcement colleagues back home; and also INTERPOL's General Secretariat with its seat in Lyon and with Sub-Regional Bureaus and offices in eight countries.

In light of this, I am proud that you have decided to invite INTERPOL to continue to help you with preventing bioterrorism, by indicating in the [Outcome Statement](#) that INTERPOL should conduct a train-the-trainers session in this region this year.

That is the next stage for us: a train-the-trainers session, right here in this region.

But, as I said earlier, you cannot prepare yourselves for this alone.

When you return home, you must build bridges among the law enforcement, science, health and medical communities.

And I especially hope your national administrations will consider creating Bioterrorism Emergency Support Teams (BEST) comprising police and public health professionals who can provide assistance and expert advice on how to prevent, investigate and respond to any potential or actual bioterrorist event.

But without the right laws on the books, you will be limited in what you can do. That is one of the reasons why INTERPOL sought and received funding from the US State Department for an initiative to help countries learn the key elements of bioterrorism legislation that would reduce the likelihood that terrorists will be able to engage in bioterrorist activity and that will give you the right legal basis for conducting investigations earlier rather than later. There is not and will not be a one-size-fits-all solution in this regard, but we hope to help to develop a way for you to benefit from the laws and experiences of other countries.

And I think that having had this week's experience, you now better see the benefits that [INTERPOL's 186 member countries](#), our NCBs and General Secretariat can provide you in preventing and fighting all forms of international crime.

Although what I will say now is beyond the scope of this week's workshop, I believe that the time has come for swift implementation of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council decision of a few years ago to create an INTERPOL Sub-Regional Bureau for your countries. The benefits of such a Sub-Regional Bureau will be seen and felt by your citizens and by you. As it stands now, much critical intelligence on international crime and terrorism is lost because you have no regional bureau where you can work side-by-side with police colleagues from the region, speaking the same language, understanding the same culture and facing many similar challenges in terms of international crime.

It is also time for your countries to send to INTERPOL's General Secretariat in Lyon, France, police officers with the experience and motivation that you have. We currently have only one seconded police officer from the Middle East. He is Mubarak Al-Khali from the United Arab Emirates. There is no reason why we couldn't have many more – including one or even a few of you who could join our Bioterrorism Prevention Unit, gain experience, contribute to our common effort and then return home to share your experience with others.

I feel so strongly about getting your countries to second police officers to INTERPOL's headquarters and to create an INTERPOL Sub-Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa that I will ask INTERPOL's Executive Committee to support my appointing George Boustani – whom you all know formerly served as an [Executive Committee](#) member, head of NCB, and as a senior Lebanese police officer – to meet with

your government leaders, ministers and heads of police in order to turn these dreams about which I have spoken into a reality.

I hope that there will be a day when we have many Bioterrorism Emergency Support Teams (BEST) in your countries, when we have many police officers from your countries working at INTERPOL headquarters, and when we have an INTERPOL Sub-Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa.

Let me turn from dreams to thank you's for what has been accomplished during this workshop.

It is my pleasure to thank everyone for making this workshop such a great success.

First, I must thank Inspector General of Police and Customs, Lieutenant General Malik Sulaiman Al-Ma'amari; Director General of Criminal Investigation Department and Head of NCB Muscat, Brigadier Suhail Amor Bait Fadhil; the Royal Oman Police; and the people of the Sultanate of Oman for hosting this workshop.

Not only the official part, but also the elegant dinner and show on Monday night. Many of us outside of this region had never been hosted in such a spectacular setting and had never seen police on camelback perform like that.

Thanks to the facilitators and speakers.

Thanks to the members of INTERPOL's Bioterrorism Prevention Unit staff for having successfully completed this final regional workshop.

Thanks to the organizers and staff from both the Royal Oman Police and INTERPOL's General Secretariat.

Thanks to the interpreters for your eloquence and patience.

Thanks to you, the 62 delegates from 15 countries who attended – and participated – in this workshop.

Thanks to John Abbott for his skillful chairmanship.

Finally, thanks to Paula Olsiewski from the Sloan Foundation, which provided the funding that made all of this possible.