

INTERPOL and Diversity

184 Countries, one shared vision:

Contribution by INTERPOL President [Jackie Selebi](#) to the publication 'Diverse Europe: The Continent of Communities'

One of the great challenges faced by international organizations and multinational corporations is to succeed in creating and maintaining an environment in which any person, regardless of gender, religion, race or nationality, can develop their full potential while respecting their various needs and expectations of its diverse stakeholders. This is no different for INTERPOL.

INTERPOL exists to help create a safer world. Its aim is to provide a unique range of essential services for the law enforcement community to optimize the international effort to combat crime. INTERPOL acts 'in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' ensuring that, in the conduct of its activities, the organisation observes human rights and respect for them encouraged. Moreover, [INTERPOL's Constitution](#) strictly forbids the Organization to undertake any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character. We constantly consider diversity issues as they determine the very standard of interaction within our daily activities. I therefore applaud the initiative to organize a conference on this very important theme.

I believe that we can better address the complex issues that INTERPOL faces on a daily basis, by people working together, rather than by one person working alone. This is particularly true when faced with global challenges that require one to consider different perspectives and approaches. Working as President of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), I find it both a challenging and a rewarding experience to lead and motivate an organization composed of [184 member countries](#), with obviously different styles and cultural backgrounds, but that share a common vision: that of helping create a safer world for everybody.

At INTERPOL, diversity is an issue that the Organization not only respects but also uses to its full advantage. INTERPOL employs approximately 450 staff members from more than 80 different countries at the General Secretariat, sub-regional bureaus and the [liaison office at the United Nations](#). Not only do they work in the Organization's four official languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish), but they also deal with cultural diversity in the course of their daily activity. The Secretary General of INTERPOL, Mr. [Ronald K. Noble](#), has made tremendous efforts to ensure that we reflect this cultural diversity at the highest management levels. For the first time in the Organization's history, and perhaps long overdue, we now have all regions of the world represented at the Director level.

It is equally important to note that the very principle of diversity is enshrined in INTERPOL's Constitution. Its [Executive Committee](#), one of the governing bodies of the Organization, must, in application of [article 15](#) of the Constitution be comprised of 13 representatives, all from different countries and, even more importantly, from all regions of the world. This has ensured that for over 50 years, in its strategic decision-making process, INTERPOL has the benefit of receiving guidance from a strategic body that reflects a variety of different cultures and approaches to policing. This rule reflects INTERPOL's basic belief that all continents, no matter the perceived differences between them, have something important to bring to global policing. INTERPOL opted again for an approach based on diversity when, in 2004, the INTERPOL Executive Committee and Secretary General Noble created the INTERPOL Strategic Advisory Panel. The panel, composed of highly respected, senior law enforcement figures from all continents, will provide valuable strategic advice on emerging issues in relation to international police co-operation and the rich

variety of background and experience of the panel will enable it to define approaches that can work effectively in all parts of the world.

One may expect, of course, a global Organization to have 'balanced' representation within its staff members and hierarchy. However, I believe the essence and importance of diversity goes far beyond these mechanical considerations.

We find it of strategic and operational importance that our governing bodies, management and staff come from the four corners of the globe so that INTERPOL can readily understand, detect and effectively balance a wide range of different needs and interests from our member countries and their police forces. It is essential for police staff at INTERPOL to have experience and insight into the crime challenges our member countries face and knowledge of how to address them effectively. To fight crime efficiently and assist member countries in developing effective strategies to deal with it, INTERPOL must be an image of today's mobile, connected world, in which communities, national borders and crime no longer correspond with each other. Hence, this is the challenge for police worldwide if they are to build bridges with the very communities it is their duty to serve. They must relate to, and understand cultural differences and sensitivities.

We see differences in gender, insight, background, experience and/or culture among our personnel as valuable commodities that enrich our Organization, and contribute to its cohesiveness and functionality. Diversity in our workforce has allowed us to be more responsive as an Organization and has provided vast resources of expertise, different perspectives and a wealth of knowledge for our policy and decision makers in determining and developing our short and long-term goals. We owe our achievements thus far as an organisation to our multi-cultural management and staff and their sharing of a common vision. One of INTERPOL's long-term objectives is for all of our member countries to have at least a national representative working full-time at the INTERPOL General Secretariat or in one of our Sub-Regional Bureaus to enhance our diversity still further.

I firmly believe that as leaders or managers of International Organizations or Multinational Corporations as diverse as INTERPOL, it is our key role to influence the culture and climate of our respective organizations. Let me therefore take this opportunity to encourage each and everyone to make a continuing commitment of creating an environment that further promotes diversity in each institution and beyond.