

Opening remarks

by [Ronald K. Noble](#), INTERPOL Secretary General
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Mr President,
Chief of Cyprus Police,
Heads of Police,
Heads of NCBs,
Europol Director,

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

When we met last year in Kiev, Ukraine, the 11 March Madrid train bombings which killed 200 people, were fresh in our minds. Those attacks and the response of NCB Madrid demonstrated the fundamental role played by INTERPOL and our National Central Bureaus when member countries are hit by terrorist attacks, not only of national and regional significance, but also of global significance. Using [INTERPOL's I-24/7 global police communications system](#), NCB Madrid sent diffusions, Red Notice applications, fingerprint images and requests for assistance around the world. INTERPOL's incident response team was there when Madrid was hit last year; we, as you know, traveled immediately to NCB Madrid to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our Spanish colleagues.

European NCBs and European police services continue to be the most active members and beneficiaries of INTERPOL. It is true that INTERPOL is a global police organization, but our primary stakeholders are the NCBs and member countries' police forces at the local level, whether it be in Europe, Africa, Asia or the Americas. Let me put it another way: the fact that we are a global organization does not mean that you should only turn to us when you have problems outside your region. Our NCBs and I-24/7 flexibility make INTERPOL the perfect vehicle for investigating and pursuing criminals inside Europe as well.

But when significant police issues arise outside of your region, INTERPOL should also be one of the first organizations to which you turn. The [tsunami](#) that struck Southeast Asia on 26 December 2004 may not be as fresh in your minds this year as the 11 March Madrid terrorist attacks were last year, but the tsunami remains a pressing police issue for 14 European countries who still have disaster victim identification teams working in that region, and it remains a priority for INTERPOL. Citizens from INTERPOL member countries remain unidentified. Families from INTERPOL member countries continue to hope that the remains of their loved ones will be identified so that they can be repatriated and so that closure can be brought to a difficult event.

Real police work has been underway in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Phuket since 26 December 2004. The identification of victims of a crime or tragedy has many parallels that only the police understand. Your disaster victim identification teams in Southeast Asia are using INTERPOL's DVI protocol; NCBs back home have been collecting ante-mortem information and sending that information to Southeast Asia using I-24/7. INTERPOL's General Secretariat has set up a Crisis Management Support Group in Lyon, and we have deployed 10 people to Phuket, Thailand, since early January and four people to Colombo, Sri Lanka. Our team in Southeast Asia is providing support in a number of areas, but especially in fingerprints and



INTERPOL Secretary General Ronald K. Noble addresses delegates on the first day of the 34th European Regional Conference.

missing persons. DVI experts, NCBs, national police around the world and INTERPOL's General Secretariat have demonstrated and are demonstrating the necessity of INTERPOL when natural or manmade disasters strike.

But, being perfectly candid, we will soon be approaching a difficult period. The number of participating countries has fallen from 30 to 16. As fewer and fewer of their citizens remain to be identified, the pressure on individual countries that remain will continue to lessen. For example, one of the strongest supporting countries in the DVI effort, a country that has been there from the start, has submitted a letter saying that it will withdraw its team on or about 15 July 2005.

Unfortunately, the job will not be done by 15 July 2005. The backlash that we will feel when countries pull out before the job is done will be felt by all of us. No country will be spared; INTERPOL will not be spared. Following discussions with the President and Executive Committee members, INTERPOL's General Secretariat will continue to support the DVI effort in Southeast Asia until the job is done. We will keep that promise.

For the next phase, I believe that we will need to transfer most of the crisis management support effort from Lyon to Thailand. We no longer have three countries in Southeast Asia where DVI work is underway. The work in Maldives is finished and the work in Sri Lanka will be completed in a few weeks. This will leave only Thailand. In order to determine exactly what the needs will be to move the DVI process from its current phase to the next, we will need to do an intense review in Thailand. INTERPOL will once again call on about three countries from Europe to participate in that review. To date, only the UK has offered us significant financial and human resource support in relation to the General Secretariat's efforts in Southeast Asia. We are thankful, but we have been disappointed that we received only 5,000 euros from one other country in Europe and absolutely no offers of personnel support, either at our Crisis Management Support Group in Lyon and on our incident response teams in Southeast Asia.

I am hopeful that during this conference other countries will come forward with meaningful offers of help. INTERPOL did not ask for this disaster, but we owe it to the families who have lost their loved ones not to let up now simply because most of the citizens of our respective countries have been identified or because we have no citizens from our respective countries who need to be identified.

Let me turn to my overview of where we are as an organization as it relates to Europe. Thanks to the support of our NCBs and Executive Committee, INTERPOL has transformed itself over the last four and a half years. We are now more relevant to your work than we have ever been. Through the growing relevance of our work at the General Secretariat to the work of police back in your countries, NCBs have become stronger and more relevant back home than you have ever been before.

The purpose of our being here is to find new and enhanced ways of working towards our collective goal: making the world a safer place. We will discuss how INTERPOL can offer support to European countries, NCBs, Europol and other European institutions in that regard, but also, very importantly, how INTERPOL can provide further impetus in law enforcement co-operation between Europe and other regions in the world.

Since our collective work will never be done, our need to share experiences and learn from one another will remain a constant.

Terrorists and other criminals, and the environment in which they operate, are constantly changing. This, in turn, requires us to continually think about how to improve the timely and secure exchange of vital police information. At the end of the day, our best defense is to ensure that the right police officers have access to the right information at the right time, without their effectiveness being hampered by national borders.

Are we successful in our endeavours?

INTERPOL, with your valuable help, has made a lot of progress in developing the necessary tools for police to enhance their necessary international co-operation. This has led to noticeable increases in the exchange of operational police information in all INTERPOL regions, and most notably in Europe.

The successful roll-out of our global police communications system, I-24/7, has led to a significant increase in the number of messages exchanged over the network. We now have 146 countries connected to I-24/7. We have done this since February 2003 and we have done this within our budget. This is nothing short of extraordinary. Just think about the problems you have had on a national level to modernise your communications system. Now think about getting 146 countries with different legal structures, different languages, different levels of technical infrastructure and different financial capacities connected to the same secure, flexible and state-of-the art communications system in a little over two years – without shutting down your operations for one minute. We could not have done this with the strong support and co-operation of your own NCBs.

More than ever before, NCBs are taking full advantage of this important tool. Message traffic on the I-24/7 network increased from 2.7 million messages in 2002 to 6.3 million messages in 2004. In Africa, we are also making extraordinary progress implementing our satellite version of I-24/7. By connecting all countries, we empower each and every one of our countries.

We should not stop there. I have the firm conviction that frontline police officers working closely with NCBs is the best combination to effectively combat international crime and terrorism. In today's world, one of the most effective tools against international criminals and terrorists is shared information and co-operation among police around the world.

Clearly, we need to maximize the benefits of the use of our network. It is in this context that I am asking you to connect to I-24/7 the maximum number of frontline police officers possible, those beyond the NCBs. Ultimately this will result in NCBs playing an increasingly important co-ordination role. This will not weaken NCBs; it will strengthen them. Why? Because each time a police officer in your country queries INTERPOL's databases and gets a 'hit', he or she will be required to contact the NCB. Therefore, he or she will learn more about the critical role played by the NCB and INTERPOL. Only NCBs have the responsibility and expertise to deal with the co-ordination of positive hits received from an international partner. In addition, NCBs can play a leadership role in their national police structure by providing expert advice on how to best use INTERPOL services. The NCBs are key to INTERPOL's success in all of the above.

This conference (and its Heads of NCBs meeting) provides an opportunity to have an open and frank discussion about how the organization can help each of you to realise your full potential.

At the same time, as we are rolling out the I-24/7 network, the use of INTERPOL's databases is increasing each year. For example, last year, I asked for your support and active participation in INTERPOL's stolen travel documents database. Your response was immediate and fantastic. I proudly report to you that all 46 European member countries are now using the stolen travel documents database -- not 75 percent, not 90 percent, but 100 percent. For this, I congratulate you.

Just to provide you with an idea of how important this tool has become, allow me to cite a few numbers. The total number of searches made in the stolen travel documents database by European member countries in 2004 was 344. Just for the first four months of 2005, European countries carried out more than 2,700 searches. Moreover, the number of documents entered into the system by the European countries has doubled in the last four months -- from 2.6 million to more than 5 million. This convincingly shows that there was a real need for law enforcement worldwide to have such a database.

The next area where we will need to have 100 percent participation will be the European arrest warrant, which has now been entered into force in all 25 EU countries. The European arrest warrant is really a way for Europe to expedite the extradition process within Europe. It is OK to issue it only in Europe if the issuing country knows in which European country the wanted person is and knows that he or she is in jail. In all other circumstances, a European arrest warrant really must have an INTERPOL diffusion or Red Notice simultaneously issued.

Let's take a real-life example.

NCB Wiesbaden (Germany) supplied fingerprint data to NCB Washington (United States) via INTERPOL, and analysis by U.S. immigration agents led last month to the capture of a fugitive wanted for murder in Germany. The man, who had been living legally in Canada under an assumed name, was captured as he was attempting to cross the U.S.-Canadian border in New York State. Thanks to NCB Wiesbaden's decision to request an INTERPOL Red Notice for the arrest of this dangerous fugitive in 1998 and NCB Washington's efforts to compare INTERPOL's fingerprint records against the fingerprint records of the US Department of Homeland Security's U.S-VISIT program, a fugitive charged with murder in Germany has been arrested in the US. This arrest could not have occurred without close co-operation at the national and international levels. At the national level, fingerprint experts were able to determine that the fingerprints of an applicant for a U.S. non-immigrant visa at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, Canada, matched a murder suspect's fingerprints which the General Secretariat had received from NCB Wiesbaden. At the international level, NCB Wiesbaden's decision to send the fingerprints of a wanted murderer to the General Secretariat and INTERPOL's Fugitive Investigative Services Unit's ongoing efforts to facilitate the ability of INTERPOL NCBs to compare fingerprints internationally led to NCB Washington's obtaining the wanted murderer's fingerprints. In addition, excellent police investigative work determined that the fugitive worked as a commercial truck driver in Canada and routinely drove to the United States.

Now, I know that the European arrest warrant did not exist in 1998, but if the same situation happened today, Germany should again use INTERPOL as well as issue a European arrest warrant. Otherwise, the wanted murderer would still be commuting regularly between the US and Canada without any worries whatsoever.

In short, in the case of serious organized criminality, such as [terrorism](#), [paedophilia](#), [drug trafficking](#), etc., European countries should take into account the fact that broadcasting arrest warrants to their European partners alone might not be sufficient. There are no legal impediments to using INTERPOL to seek the arrests of international fugitives. INTERPOL was created for this purpose. There is no organization better in the world at doing it; there is no worldwide network stronger than our NCBs to make sure that it is done right; and there is no secure police communications system as effective or easy to use as I-24/7 for doing it.

Let me take a moment to highlight a point that some of you are discovering and that in my view will become an increasingly important tool for police in Europe and around the world. In my view, from a practical standpoint, a formatted diffusion seeking the arrest of a person worldwide for a serious crime is the swiftest and easiest way to alert police around the world that a dangerous criminal is wanted, and it might be the most effective way to limit the travel options of fugitives.

Diffusions, as you know, can be immediately disseminated worldwide using I-24/7. Diffusions can also contain [fingerprints](#), [DNA profiles](#) and photographs of the wanted criminals. They can be issued by you without any processing or review by the General Secretariat. Many of you already know these facts. The statistics are convincing: between 2000 and 2004, the number of diffusions issued by European countries almost doubled, from 4,500 to 7,500. But just for the first four months of 2005, European countries have already issued more than 3,700 diffusions. If this rate of increase continues, that would mean 11,100 diffusions for 2005. That is almost two and a half times the number of diffusions issued in 2000.

Clearly, this is a strong signal for us and it has convinced us that we must undertake further efforts to make this tool as user-friendly as possible. During the conference, you will hear in more detail about our initiative to create a pre-formatted diffusion. The 'formatted diffusion' consists of a pre-formatted message seeking a particular action -- to locate and trace, to arrest in order to serve a sentence or prosecute, to search for a missing person, to identify an unidentified body. It can contain fingerprints, photographs, DNA profiles and, importantly, it incorporates the specific fields of the European arrest warrant.

The last substantive point I would like to raise with you concerns training. Each and every year, INTERPOL's NCBs and its member countries request more and more training opportunities. This area is very important for law enforcement worldwide, and INTERPOL wants to make a difference in this area. In

order to do so, we are setting up a police training program in our new INTERPOL training office. My expectation is that each of you will share with us your needs in the area of international police training, but also will offer the expertise held in your country that could benefit other countries and regions of the world. Investing in police training in other countries is investing in your own security as well.

Let me now highlight what INTERPOL considers an extraordinary event that recently occurred in Europe that is worthy of special recognition. Just yesterday, Max Peter Ratzel had his official swearing-in ceremony as Director of Europol. I believe that I was one of the first people who called him to congratulate him months ago when he was selected. His personal cell number is stored in my cell phone – unless for security reasons he has changed it.

From what I have heard about him, Max Peter Ratzel and I share at least one thing in common: we both are intense individuals who are deeply committed to finding practical solutions to difficult problems. I say to you, Max, publicly and on the record, that I and my organization will do everything in our power to provide you and your colleagues at Europol with all of the support you need. I took a decision over a year ago to make all of the information in all of our databases accessible to your colleagues at Europol. Unfortunately, for reasons that I cannot understand, that decision has still not been able to be put into effect. So, I ask you to help me find a solution to this problem so that we can give you the access that your colleagues need. Once this is achieved, I will ask you to find a way for INTERPOL to have access to information in your databases.

Let me close by reminding everyone that the cornerstone of international police co-operation lies in the basic principles that to be safe, all countries must know both the national and international criminal backgrounds of suspects, and that all countries must strive to prevent national criminals from escaping internationally and international criminals from crossing inside any one country's borders.

Making this happen requires a strong organization with committed staff. INTERPOL is such an organization. But an organization can only remain strong if its leaders are supported by its membership and by its oversight body.

On the membership side, our NCBs have given me and INTERPOL all the support that we could possibly want. INTERPOL's European Committee and our Assistant Director for Europe Julia Viedma Robles have done an extraordinary job in preparing for this conference and in helping INTERPOL to be even more responsive to the needs of Europe.

On the oversight side, we are fortunate to have had our President, South Africa's Commissioner of Police, [Jackie Selebi](#), fly here to open this conference and to be with us for the entire week. President Selebi is not only one of the smartest people with whom I have worked, but he is also without par at bringing people with seemingly conflicting interests together. Mr President, thank you for being with us.

And President Selebi and we at the General Secretariat are supported by an aggressive and strong [Executive Committee](#). Vice-President Ronconi from Italy, Madame Ballestrazzi from France, Juris Jasinkevics from Latvia and Ken Pandolfi from the UK represent the interests of the European region and the interests of the entire organization at the highest standards possible. Let me also recognise and thank Georges Boustani of Lebanon, representing the Asia region, for caring deeply enough about the issues concerning you to be here with us this week.

Finally, let me thank all of our hosts here from Cyprus for having organized such a great conference and for the warm hospitality that you have displayed to all of us.

Dear colleagues, thank you very much for being here. I am convinced that this meeting will help us address all of the issues I have just outlined.

