

## 25th Conference for Arab Police and Security Leaders

Tunis, Tunisia - October 22, 2001

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

Mr. Minister of Interior,  
Mr. Secretary General of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers,  
Mr. President,  
Distinguished Chiefs of Police,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a very special honor to be permitted to address you on the occasion of your 25th annual conference. This is my first opportunity as Secretary General of [INTERPOL](#) to participate in this important meeting, and I look forward to a continuing partnership between our organizations. In the past 25 years, the world has changed in remarkable ways and it has placed new and often difficult demands and expectations on our profession. The need for police cooperation among nations was no doubt the principal impetus behind your first meeting. Since that time we have had a revolution in communication and transportation. Many new countries have emerged with the fall of the Soviet Union presenting new nations for us to deal with.

But, alas, we do not have to go back twenty five years to see how the world has changed. The events of September 11th have changed policing and they have changed [INTERPOL](#) for ever. The citizens of 80 nations perished or are missing in the rubble of the World Trade Center. Investigative leads have spanned the globe. [INTERPOL](#), within hours of the terrorist attack, became a 24-hour, seven days a week international police agency. While we had been planning such a move, the events accelerated our timetable. We will never return to a 9 to 5, five days a week organization again.

We have taken other actions as well. Some have criticized [INTERPOL](#) for too heavy a focus on Europe and the United States. If [INTERPOL](#) is to serve the needs of the world's police community, it must look more like the world. Six days after the attacks in New York and Washington, we carried out a major reorganization of our services: Elevating the Police Functions within the organization by creating an Executive Director who will be the number two official and increasing from two to four the number of Directors involved in police services. This new organization has allowed me to promote police officers from Asia, Africa and the Middle East to important new positions. One of them is with us today. Saoud Mohammed is the new Assistant Director for North Africa and the Middle East.

As you know, within [INTERPOL](#)'s regional structure, we divide the Arab-speaking world between Africa and Asia. However, it is my view that if we are to have effective relations with the Arab Police Community, the Secretariat needs a somewhat different organization. Indeed, this organizational arrangement anticipates steps the Arab Police community is contemplating regarding the establishment of a new Sub-regional Bureau. It is Saoud Mohammed's team's mission to help us achieve a stronger partnership with you and your organization.

It is important to me that [INTERPOL](#)'s services meet your needs. On a recent visit to Qatar and Bahrain it was clear that we were not as effective as we must be. Clearly, [INTERPOL](#) being closed on Saturday and Sunday does not meet the working needs of the Arab world. Nevertheless, even during this difficult transition period at the Secretariat, I must commend many of your police organizations for helping us get

arrest notices issued and other key information distributed quickly and accurately in light of the terrorist attacks. But much more can and will be done.

Let me also introduce Mr. Souheil El Zein, formerly the Legal Counsel of INTERPOL. Several months ago, I asked him to undertake a new assignment, one for which he was uniquely qualified. His job is to integrate the Arab language into the day to day workings of INTERPOL. His background as a translator, as well as his service as INTERPOL's top lawyer and his enthusiasm for this mission is unique. For example he has been exploring with the "*Institut du Monde Arabe*" in Paris, UNESCO and other organizations creative approaches to building the Arab language into INTERPOL. This work is essential if we are to be a truly international police agency. This means ensuring that we have Arab speakers in all key positions, that our web-site recognizes the importance of the Arab language, and that our new Atlas telecommunications system and its software fits the needs of the Arab speaking world.

The new organizational changes that I mentioned are a start. In addition, we have recently hired an Arab speaker for our Notices Branch and are advertising a position for a Criminal Intelligence analyst with fluency in Arabic. However, Souheil needs your ideas on further steps we might take to facilitate your ability to use INTERPOL's services. Souheil and Saoud are even working hard to make sure that I keep up my lessons in Arabic. It is such a beautiful language but not easy to learn at the end of the work day.

*In conclusion*, achieving the goals of the founders of your organization became even more critical following the events of September 11 and the subsequent Anthrax crises. Our citizens need us to work together if their safety and security are to be assured. I pledge to you INTERPOL's commitment to work toward that goal.

Thank you.