

10th International Anti-Corruption Conference

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The role of the police in fostering political commitment

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

Mr Prime Minister, Madam Chairperson, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues.

It is indeed a great honour for me to address you again. Two years ago in Durban, I spoke to you as a Professor of law at New York University and a candidate to become the next Secretary General of INTERPOL. Eleven months ago I was confirmed as Secretary General so I am pleased to be here, not only to speak of the role of the police in fostering political commitment, but also to demonstrate the high priority that INTERPOL places on the issue of fighting corruption.

INTERPOL is a unique international organization. While it is made up of [179 countries](#) committed to the exchange of police information, it has fewer than 200 full-time employees and 150 seconded police officers at its Headquarters. What can such an organization provide in the struggle against corruption? The most important role we can play is to join with you as the representatives of civil society, to create unique partnerships. Yes, we can and are developing codes of police conduct and establishing a library of best practices. Together, we are undertaking police integrity surveys and developing training manuals. Our last three General Assemblies in Seoul, Rhodes and [Budapest](#) enacted resolutions unanimously supporting anti-corruption initiatives and reaffirming these programs as high priorities. But the national police forces around the world do not have to act based on INTERPOL's guidance. We can provide leadership but we cannot dictate to any police service. We can provide best practices but no-one needs to follow them. Thus, if we are to make progress against the problem of police corruption, we need your help to persuade civil societies, local governments and police about the importance of fighting corruption.

I do not believe that democracy can flourish, that economies can grow and that human rights and dignity can be maintained without the world's citizens having confidence in the integrity of their police. But this is a difficult and long-term struggle. Other priorities will arise, but we can never forget that if our institutions do not continue to make progress towards eliminating the insidious disease of corruption, nothing else will matter. Therefore, I would like to personally thank the organizers of this 10th Conference for their courage and commitment in insisting that this conference proceed. INTERPOL's General Assembly was held a fortnight ago in Budapest when many believed that because of the events of September 11, we should cancel. We thus stand shoulder to shoulder with you in saying that your work here is as important as the fight against terrorism.

It is true that on September 11, the citizens of the world experienced unparalleled acts of violence and terror. These acts left a once vibrant city and its people devastated, and although the dust and rubble will be cleared away eventually, the horror and scars will remain with us forever. I am a U.S. citizen and consider New York City my home and I just returned from there yesterday. But it is important to note that among the thousands of people murdered in cold blood on that day, were citizens from over 80 countries. All of us were touched in some way by this tragedy.

The reaction of the international community was powerful. Condemnation of these barbaric acts was almost unanimous; the horror had touched people from all walks of life; thousands rallied to the stricken

city; tens of thousands of offers of assistance were made. Last night, the long awaited military response began. But, the fight against terrorism cannot be won on a military battlefield alone. Terrorism, like corruption, requires civil society, local government, prosecutors and police to combine efforts to bring those guilty to justice.

Let me briefly attempt to explain how the September 11 terrorist acts cannot be separated from the fight against corruption. Following the tragic events of September 11, we, in law enforcement, were awash with many new ideas – ideas on how to improve security and the investigation processes. International cooperation had never been better; arrests were executed in Hamburg and the U.S. within hours of the tragedy. New security committees were formed; new legislation was introduced. The intelligence community, law enforcement, the financial institutions community, the airline industries and many others, each in its own way, tried to contribute something to ease the pain caused by the tragedy, to bring the guilty to justice, to prevent this from ever happening again. But, Ladies and Gentlemen, all of these good initiatives, these well meaning intentions, may amount to nothing, if the potential for large-scale corruption remains. If customs, police and security professionals are corrupt, no expensive high tech devices will provide our citizens with the security they deserve. If corrupt public servants provide false identity documents, terrorists will move more freely throughout the world, and all of our societies will be threatened.

Frankly, Ladies and Gentlemen, the most sophisticated security systems, the best structures, or trained and dedicated security personnel are useless, if they are undermined from the inside - by a simple act of corruption – the fact is that the strongest fortress will crumble if it is built upon sand!

In addition to spending billions of dollars on improving our intelligence gathering systems and mechanisms and on new crime detection systems, we must also invest in the people who operate them. Technological developments in combating crime are good, but people remain indispensable in the struggle against crime and corruption. Therefore we have an obligation to invest in them, and to keep investing in them.

So what do I mean by 'investing in people'?

We need to identify the people at risk, people in key positions, who for one reason or another, are likely to be compromised, likely to be the targets of organized crime or of any other criminal group.

We need to build efficient and effective integrity systems; it begins with revising or refining our selection - or recruiting policies and procedures. Thorough background checks are no longer sufficient and need to be reinforced with codes of conduct and ethics, which continually and regularly should be confirmed by all personnel. With each promotion, core values such as integrity and professionalism should be restated. Furthermore, all personnel should be subjected to integrity testing- random and/or targeted. An effective integrity system includes regular inspections and audits of all processes. It develops early warning signs and employs risk analysis of not only potential threats to staff members, but also of members whose habits might pose a threat to their colleagues and the Service. An integrity system cannot function without conscientious, effective and well-trained managers. All of the above need to be reinforced with constant education and training, both of which should emphasize and re-emphasize integrity and high ethical standards.

These are not my ideas alone. These ideas came from people at INTERPOL such as Rainer Bühler, reaching out to individuals from your community such as Kevin Ford, Judge Barry O'Keefe and others who will be mentioned later. INTERPOL is currently evaluating a document called '[Standards for Combating Corruption in Police Forces/Services](#)'. This is a comprehensive document which, in essence, proposes best practices for member countries to aspire to, with the objective of improving their effectiveness and efficiency in combating corruption. This document grew as a result of INTERPOL working with your community.

However, we can only do so much! Law enforcement does not operate in a vacuum or in a closed, separate system. It functions within a political hierarchy with many competing interests. Police chiefs are not independent; they depend on their hierarchy for all kinds of support -- budgetary, judicial and legislative. Police chiefs around the world are united in their struggle for additional resources and

legislative reforms to enable them, in the motto of the NYPD, 'to serve and protect'. It should not, and cannot be, that the needs of the law enforcement community, such as adequate resources and the appropriate tools to prevent and detect crime, are only addressed in response to a tragedy.

As Henry Louis Mencken once said: 'For every problem, there is a solution that is simple, elegant, and wrong.' In order to combat corruption effectively, we can no longer afford cheap, quick and short-term solutions, but in order to do the right thing, we need the uncompromising support of our political leaders. You, as representatives of civil society, are essential if we are to meet this challenge. I intend to make available to everyone who cares, the guides and practices that INTERPOL's Headquarters believes are essential to address the integrity needs of the world's police services. However, we must have your help to see that they are implemented. At this conference, INTERPOL will be chairing two panels. The Director of my Cabinet, Stan Morris, and Assistant Director for Financial and High Tech Crime, Rainer Bührer, will be representing INTERPOL. Stan and Rainer have been long-term contributors to the fight against corruption, to this conference and to TI.

In conclusion, I am grateful to have been invited again and hope that when we come together again two years hence, that we can report continued progress. The world's citizens deserve no less.

Thank you.