

## High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on Transnational Organized Crime

Speech by [Ronald K. Noble](#) INTERPOL Secretary General  
17 June 2010, UN Headquarters, New York, United States

Mr. Chairman and dear friend, Antonio Maria Costa,  
Excellencies,  
Ministers,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here today, representing INTERPOL on this event as we approach the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.

I am equally happy to be part of such a distinguished panel on this occasion, representing a wide spectrum of key players in international efforts against organized crime.

Let me first thank the governments of Italy and Mexico and UNODC for organizing this meeting.

In 2000, the United Nations lived up once again to its high purpose.

As stated in Article 1 of its Charter, signed 65 years ago this month, it acted as "*a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations, in the attainment*" of a pivotal common objective...

....that of countering transnational organized crime, in all its forms, across borders, **together**, as one united front.

And it is the anatomy of the threat itself, which makes it a formidable global challenge.

We have seen transnational organized crime:

- ▶ weaken state structures by fueling instability and corruption;
- ▶ hide behind a mask of legitimacy, penetrating into financial markets;
- ▶ forge deadly alliances based on profit, as seen with terrorist groups;
- ▶ shift priorities towards highly lucrative and low-risk activities, such as counterfeit medical products.

We have seen all this – irrespective of ideology, the well-being of our co-citizens, and certainly regardless of national and regional borders.

This is how the world was made a single, seamless market for organized crime groups to seek illicit profit.

And it is a world that has evolved dramatically since 2000, in the opportunities it provides to transnational organized crime.

Ten years after Palermo, technology has made anonymity, global reach and unprecedented ease of action across borders a reality for criminals.

Criminal networks are becoming less tangible, but certainly not less lethal in their ability to strike.

In a world where 2 billion individuals will be soon able to access the Internet, victims and perpetrators are more and more often located on different continents.

Illicit proceeds can be acquired through fraud, laundered and reinvested literally at the click of a mouse or, as mobile banking users grow exponentially, through a simple text message sent anywhere in the world.

Organized crime is acting: trafficking is occurring as we speak, as almost 2.5 billion passengers and 43 million freight tons are traveling by air every year.

What does this really mean for our fight?

This world calls on those who are still to ratify or accede to the Convention and its Protocols to do so and to do so as rapidly as possible ... for a simple reason.

It will be the **implementation** of the Palermo Convention that will determine whether the international community has lived up to its commitments.

The final judgment of history on the success of this instrument – its true, measurable success – will depend on the results achieved every day in the field.

Results such as the identification and arrest of those belonging or suspected to belong to organized crime whenever they try to cross a border or commit a crime abroad.

Or results like stemming the flow of illegal proceeds likely to continue to play a major role in the years to come – such as those identified by the additional Protocols to the Palermo Convention.

But how to achieve this, when the world that in 2000 had enjoyed 4 percent average economic growth saw global GDP decline by 2.2 percent in 2009? And while in the same year, estimates of illicit proceeds from transnational crime ranged between 1 and 7 trillion US dollars?

It's straightforward. By using the extraordinary technological developments that have occurred since 2000 and that have transformed the way INTERPOL's member countries cooperate using our network to add value to our collective fight against transnational organized crime.

INTERPOL stands ready to continue to work closely with all Parties involved to facilitate the implementation of the Palermo Convention and its Protocols.

INTERPOL's model is very straightforward: we want the right police information to be received by the right law enforcement official at the right time, so that key opportunities against transnational crime are not missed.

And what greater opportunity than accessing information shared by the rest of the world on convicted or suspected organized crime members?

This year alone, INTERPOL member countries obtained more than 70,000 positive hits from nominal database searches.

Each of these hits represents potential key information acquired by a police officer on an individual of interest to him or her.

What if that information were the affiliation to a major foreign organized crime group by a passenger undergoing a random check while entering the country?

What if a fingerprint or DNA profile check against INTERPOL databases had determined that what appeared to be an isolated property crime was actually part of a well-organized transnational criminal strategy?

The marginal cost of sharing a piece of information is minimal.

But its global marginal value – in today's world – is enormous.

This is especially true when it comes to the offences identified by the Additional Protocols of the Palermo Convention.

Trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and trafficking in arms enjoy traditionally rigid and growing demand, making them key sources for support to organized crime.

The figures are staggering.

More than 12 million victims of trafficking in persons were estimated in the world in 2009.

Small arms alone were responsible for an estimated 60 to 90 percent of direct conflict deaths and tens of thousands victims outside of war zones.

In addition, at a time of global crisis, the pool of migrants to be tapped by organized crime is expected to rise substantially over the next few years.

All these crimes rely heavily on borders as shields against detection and prosecution. This may explain, then, why only 0.4 percent of trafficking victims were identified over the last year, despite numbering in the millions.

And once again, international information-sharing and constant law enforcement communication are the most effective – and efficient – strategy to turn borders from opportunities into obstacles to organized crime.

It was rapid and secure communication that last week allowed police from Colombia, the United States, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa to work together through INTERPOL to locate – across three continents and in less than 18 hours – a young Colombian national feared to be a victim of traffickers in persons.

And it is information-sharing that provides the foundation of INTERPOL's stolen and lost travel documents database, which serves daily the principles mentioned in Articles 11-13 of the Protocols on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants.

Just last January, for instance, thanks to information inserted by Sweden into the database, an individual wanted by the Netherlands for trafficking in persons and the group he led were prevented from transiting illegally through Trinidad and Tobago using stolen Swedish passports.

And finally, it is thanks to instruments like:

the INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table (IFRT),

the INTERPOL Firearms Tracing Instrument,

and the INTERPOL Ballistics Information Network,

that information shared globally by police services plays a pivotal role in the identification of firearms and their tracing of their ownership history, with potential key implications in countering transnational trafficking.

What I just described are achievable steps through which the principles of the Palermo Convention can be successfully implemented and turned into tangible results in the field, as demanded by our citizens.

I say this, as the head of an organization that witnesses daily the challenges faced by those brave men and women of law enforcement fighting organized crime in the streets of the world.

Not taking full advantage of what innovation has provided us and which is today within our reach would seriously jeopardize our chances of success tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Earlier this year, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: "Member States have united to fight pandemics, poverty, climate change and terrorism. We can and must do the same to counter organized crime. We have a shared responsibility to act."

And I can assure all of you that INTERPOL will play an active role in this regard as we move forward together.

Thank you.