



SPEECH • DISCOURS • DISCURSO • خطابات

REMARKS

by

Ronald K. Noble

INTERPOL Secretary General

**21<sup>st</sup> INTERPOL  
Americas Regional Conference**

6 July 2011

Oranjestad, Aruba

INTERPOL President KHOO Boon Hui;

Commissioner of Police of Aruba, Mr Adolfo RICHARDSON;

Chiefs of police;

INTERPOL Executive Committee members;

Heads of INTERPOL National Central Bureaus;

Colleagues from INTERPOL General Secretariat;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning – BON DÍA - to all of you who have travelled from all over the region and the world to be here and attend this 21st INTERPOL Americas Regional Conference.

It is a true pleasure to be here today, and to address such a vast and distinguished audience. Particularly so, when we are lucky enough to be guests in beautiful Aruba.

I am also glad to see with us today delegates from two other autonomous countries (separate entities if you will) within the Kingdom of the Netherlands: Curaçao and St Maarten.

We look very much forward to their one day applying to continue their membership in INTERPOL under their respective country names, just like Aruba did in 1987.

And each time I visit Aruba, it is difficult not to stare in amazement at its landscape, its flawless beaches and its people, whose origins can be traced all over the world.

It is easy, then, to understand why most of us have come to know this island as the place “where happiness lives” and where happiness can be sought by anyone.

However, as police professionals we know that too often the happiness of our co-citizens can become a target - and fall prey to those who choose to break the law.

Unfortunately, the white beaches of Aruba are no exception.

It was here that Natalee Holloway, an 18-year old student from the United States, was last seen in 2005, before her disappearance.

Five years later, in March 2010, while struggling to cope with that tragedy, Natalee’s family became prey to a ruthless individual, who allegedly tried to extort money in exchange for false information on Natalee’s location and fate.

1,700 miles away and only two months later, the happiness of another innocent citizen was again the victim of a violent crime. It was in Lima, Peru, that a 21-year-old female student was found murdered in a hotel room after a seemingly normal night.

The prime suspect in the Natalee Holloway disappearance case, Joran Van der Sloot, was again the prime police suspect, but this time it was murder. This time he had already fled the scene of crime, and was feared to have exited the country.

But thanks to rapid coordination between NCB Lima, NCB Santiago de Chile and INTERPOL's Command and Control Centre in Lyon, in just 24 hours Joran Van der Sloot was located, apprehended in Chile and expelled back to Peru. Let me congratulate the NCBs of the countries involved and our CCC for your close cooperation and fast work.

The use of INTERPOL channels unveiled another disturbing fact.

Joran Van der Sloot is also the person wanted by the US via an INTERPOL Red Notice for allegedly extorting money from Natalee Holloway's family only a year before.

Thanks again to the fine efforts of our member countries, our NCBs and INTERPOL's General Secretariat, Joran Van der Sloot is in custody and away from innocent people who could be at risk were he still travelling internationally.

Once again, we were reminded of how mobile and how dangerous criminals can be, and how borders across the Americas and beyond them are almost invisible in the eyes of crime.

International fugitives represent the epitome of the challenge confronting us.

And it was precisely in the realm of fugitive investigations that once again INTERPOL found in the Americas region valuable allies and concrete results on the ground.

Since 2009, INTERPOL has been applying an innovative approach to fugitive investigations, by gathering specialized officers in one location for a single operation, and combining police intelligence and tips from the public on a select number of cases.

The results of operations INFRA-RED 2009 and 2010 told us we were on the right track.

But even before then, the Americas had shown their trust in this concept. Back in 2009, more than half of the active participating members came from this very region.

Their trust was well warranted. 75 per cent of the arrests conducted within the one-month operation involved fugitives either wanted by, or eventually arrested in, member countries from the Americas. More than 50 per cent of other positive locations occurred in this same region.

As Mr Rafael PEÑA, Head of RB Buenos Aires, will illustrate in detail tomorrow morning, in 2011 we took one step further.

We had witnessed officers from the Americas work with exceptional skills and enthusiasm in both INFRA-RED 2009 and 2010.

We saw growing demand from South America for an INFRA RED-type operation specifically tailored to the region.

That is how INFRA-SA (South America) was born and launched in 2011, combining a successful format to strong regional capabilities.

To date, I am happy to report that we have already more than 50 cases where the arrest or positive location of wanted individuals has been achieved and confirmed.

Needless to say, we are not surprised by these results.

First, we knew we were going to rely on a traditionally strong network of investigators from the region, who stand as ideal allies to our specialized unit in Lyon.

Secondly, we knew we could rely on a well-trusted regional platform such as our regional bureau in Buenos Aires.

Equally importantly, INFRA-SA allowed us to test our new operations room in Buenos Aires, which will soon host INTERPOL's new Command and Coordination Centre component based in the Americas.

This is far from being simply a new logistical development.

This is among the first steps towards the new INTERPOL, the improving INTERPOL, the innovative INTERPOL.

Today, I attend the Americas Regional Conference for the first time since the INTERPOL General Assembly appointed me for a third term as Secretary General in Doha, Qatar last November, for which I remain deeply indebted to you.

On that same day, our 188 member countries unanimously endorsed the vision which will guide INTERPOL over the next five years.

That vision includes a new architecture, where INTERPOL's operational support to police globally will be run across three locations on three continents.

Lyon. Singapore. Buenos Aires.

Three global shifts.

24/7 support worldwide.

Simply put, we are making the Americas one of the three pillars of our global operational assistance model.

This is a vision we strongly believe in. One which will bring INTERPOL to a higher standard in serving police forces across the whole membership.

In addition, it is a vision we see aligned to recent developments on the international arena – at the regional, and even more importantly, at the global level.

Only two weeks ago, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank Group unveiled their plans to invest as a whole almost 2 billion US dollars in security-related initiatives in Central America.

Being devoted to connect police across the Americas and the rest of the world, INTERPOL stands ready to partner with any countries seeking to ensure that some of those resources will go towards the deployment of our tested tools and services to enhance national and regional security.

Last May, I attended a summit organized by the new Presidency of the G8 and solely focused on cocaine trafficking across the Atlantic. Once again, crime and security in the Americas were under the spotlight on the global agenda.

The international community seems to be giving renewed attention to what INTERPOL has contended time and again across the years.

No economic development, no social progress can exist in the Americas or elsewhere without true security.

And, in parallel, that when cross-border crime is left to proliferate across one region, the issue becomes quickly a matter of global relevance.

It seems we are entering a time where new opportunities will arise, and will need to be seized.

But at the same time, we are still in the aftermath of a financial crisis that left member countries struggling to reduce spending, and law enforcement – including INTERPOL - constrained in its resources.

Then how, in this landscape, can we ensure that tomorrow we will be closer to our vision?

How can we ensure that cross-border police cooperation across the Americas - and beyond - will be a cornerstone of the future?

The answer is straightforward, and it comes not only from common sense, but from what INTERPOL witnessed throughout its history.

We must invest our resources where they will return the most.

We must become even better focused, and concentrate on those elements which have made the INTERPOL family so strong in the Americas.

Among them, of course, is our network of strong, vibrant National Central Bureaus and affiliated agencies, which provide the backbone of INTERPOL's action in the region.

Since our last meeting in Viña del Mar, Chile, we have seen them work relentlessly every single day.

We have seen their successes in the field – too many to be listed today.

But let me cite two we are particularly proud of.

Most of you will remember how six years ago, we had launched Operation Jupiter together with the World Customs Organization.

We wanted to send a clear message: that counterfeiting was as serious a threat as any other weapon in the hands of organized crime. Back then, we started with three countries: Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.

Now fast-forward to 2010: Jupiter V has been a year-long operation bringing together 13 countries and 150 specialized investigators and custom officials.

It was this exceptional participation which allowed authorities in the region to net fake products worth 200 million US\$ and conduct close to 1,000 arrests.

The same applies to Operation Pangea III, targeting pharmaceutical crime and which ran in October 2010 and saw as participants from the Americas region Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Mexico and the USA.

With pharmaceutical crime – and illegal sales via the internet in particular – as a target, the operation was a success across the region with more than 500 websites investigated, thousands of packages inspected, and more than a million illicit pills seized.

Even more importantly, we are now excited to see that almost twice as many countries from the Americas will participate in the next phase of operation Pangea this year.

What I just described are two operations that in no way would have been possible without the experience and dedication we found across our NCBs, our Regional Bureaus and the other agencies involved.

That is precisely why the best recipe for success for the Organization and the countries it serves, is to keep empowering those who believe in INTERPOL, those who use INTERPOL.

First, we want more of them to access even better policing tools across the region and across the world.

Almost 90 years ago this very day, the first photo was sent experimentally by radio across the Atlantic, marking a milestone in international information exchange.

Today, police in the Americas can access a wealth of information and intelligence from within and outside of the region, in ways that would have been unimaginable until recently.

In 2005, more than 200,000 searches were conducted against our global databases by officers in the Americas.

Five years later in 2010, we recorded more than 200 million searches which amounts to half a million searches a day.

This represents approximately one-third of searches conducted globally by the entire membership.

What does each of these searches represent?

- The opportunity to match DNA evidence to identify and locate the author of a string of sexual attacks occurring across two continents;
- The chance to discover that among travellers landing in the Caribbean, was actually a human trafficker wanted in Europe and trying to use stolen passports to cross borders;

or..

- The identification of a paedophile, allegedly responsible for molesting more than 50 children in Europe, thanks to a picture retrieved in the American region and shared globally.

That is why INTERPOL is working to ensure that more officers in more units can access our global policing tools, and that new tools can be designed to meet the needs of the region.

Therefore, it is a pleasure to report that during my first official visit to Curaçao as Secretary General – just 24 hours ago – plans to deploy MIND/FIND solutions throughout the country were finalized.

Soon, Curaçao will see its determination to counter cross-border crime rewarded by accessing our global tools where it counts the most – in the field. In parallel, the INTERPOL global network will gain a new key node in the Americas and even more extensive reach.

In addition, as I speak, thanks to the generosity of the US Department of State, we are implementing a new initiative that by mid-2012 will see NCB infrastructure upgraded and I-24/7 extended to a total of 40 remote sites across seven countries in Central America.

Negotiations with other donors from outside the region are also ongoing to further provide access to our tools at key border posts in the regions.

As for new tools, you may recall how in Viña del Mar I had mentioned the development of a new database, specifically designed to collect and share intelligence on the maras, to facilitate cross-border investigations on a phenomenon whose reach covers 10 countries over two regions.

Today, I am happy to announce that despite significant technical challenges, the database is finally live and operational, and is now ready to be populated by our member countries to become a new weapon at their disposal.

Yet naturally, one of the basic principles of policing is that no officer should be allowed to handle a weapon without proper training.

That is why between 2009 and 2010, more than 1,000 officers have benefited from our operational training sessions across the Americas region, in order to develop the right skills to exploit our tools to their fullest.

A particular source of pride comes from the launch of the INTERPOL Mobile Police Training Programme.

The IMPTP had the Americas as its testing ground, and saw four very successful modules delivered over the past 12 months, thanks to the leadership of Dale Sheehan and Julia Viedma Robles with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in Canada.

Also thanks to the generosity of DFAIT Canada, over the next three years, INTERPOL will be holding another round of follow-up training sessions in Central America.

Yet no matter how well designed an intelligence sharing tool, and no matter how well-trained an officer in its use, nothing beats police officers getting together, combining their experience and working shoulder to shoulder.

Our vision includes officers being able to travel internationally as rapidly as possible for police purposes. That concept was behind the creation of the INTERPOL Travel Document initiative in 2009.

Today, less than two years later, we see that idea grow, evolve and gain momentum. To date, 18 member countries worldwide have already recognized the ITD by granting special visa status to its holders.

In the Americas, 17 countries have now started negotiations on recognition with their national authorities. In parallel, CARICOM is actively supporting the initiative and discussions with MERCOSUR will take place next month.

You know and I know that if you want to be able to move more freely and quickly around the world to fight crime in conjunction with INTERPOL, then you and we will need a strong and robust INTERPOL Travel Document.

Once again, thanks to your support we will see our vision coming closer to reality.

A support which through the years has provided one of the cornerstones of INTERPOL: the sharing of experienced law enforcement officers by its member countries.

Back in 2005, more than 65 per cent of officials from the Americas working at our General Secretariat and regional bureaus were experienced police officers seconded by their agencies.

Unfortunately, today later, that percentage has dropped to 40 per cent. To date, there are 30 vacant seconded posts at our General Secretariat.

This is a trend which must be reversed: not just for the sake of INTERPOL, but to ensure that the next generation of police professionals from the Americas Region can fully exploit the potential of international policing via our channels.

Let me say this as clearly as possible: this is among the safest investments your governments can make for the future of security and law enforcement in your country and in this region.

No doubt, a future which will present us with new challenges.

But no doubt, a future we should look at with great confidence, and for a simple reason.

Earlier today, I greeted all of you with BON DÍA using one of Aruba's native languages, the Papiamentu.

Its sound is unique, its origins are fascinating.

Papiamentu speaks by itself of how people from different nations, with different backgrounds and cultures found common grounds and created a common language as the foundation of their living together.

This - reminded me of INTERPOL.

No matter our country of origin or law enforcement agency of affiliation, at INTERPOL we are all part of the same family.

We speak the common language of protectors of the people.

We look at the future with the same eyes.

Hence, there is no limit to what we can achieve together.

Thank you, I wish you all a great conference.