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ADDRESS

by

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President Khoo Boon Hui,

Dr Elmer R. WILSOE, Minister of Justice of Curaçao;

Distinguished Chiefs of Police;

INTERPOL Executive Committee members;

Dear Heads of INTERPOL National Bureaus;

Dear Colleagues from INTERPOL General Secretariat, Regional Bureaus and Liaison Offices and from member countries around the world,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here as the leaders of INTERPOL's National Central Bureaus gather together from all over the world.

Let me first extend my warmest welcome to representatives of Curaçao, Sint Maarten and South Sudan, who joined INTERPOL last October making our family bigger, and stronger than ever.

A special salute also to those who for the first time attend this annual conference following your appointment as Heads of NCB. I believe there are almost 60 of you. It is a pleasure to have you here with us.

The video you just saw tells the tale of our Heads of NCB Conference: sharing the unique crime-fighting experience of our member countries, assessing what we have achieved through INTERPOL over the past year, and designing our strategy to tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

And this year, we will do so at a particularly critical time for this Organization.

Two weeks ago, INTERPOL General Secretariat Headquarters came under a concerted criminal attack.

On February, 28 at 22:50 Lyon time, a global wave of cyber-attacks was launched against our IT systems by Anonymous and its supporters. Anonymous' assault on us followed a successful international law enforcement operation against suspected members of the group by several of our member countries.

This map shows the suspected location of the IP addresses involved over the first 25 minutes of the attack. An IP address identifies a particular computer on the Internet. Every computer, whether it be a Web server or the computer you're using right now, requires an IP address to connect to the Internet. So, you can see how many computers were involved in this attack, but an extraordinary aspect of this image is that this damage could have been caused by a handful of people.

At its peak, that wave saw 400,000 attacks per minute. We normally face 300 per minute. That is more than 1,000 times the attacks that we ordinarily face.

Thousands of machines were mobilized based on an internet posting by Anonymous. Internet users were given by the group an instructions handbook and tools to shield their identity.

They had one - and only one - purpose in mind: shutting down INTERPOL's systems.

I am happy to report that they failed in their objective.

At no point, was the integrity of our databases or their content compromised. Nor was our member countries' capacity - your capacity - to share information or access our databases via I-24/7 hindered.

This fine result occurred thanks to great planning; the work of our private sector partners....

...but first and foremost, thanks to the dedication of our specialists at INTERPOL's Information Systems and Technology Directorate. They are the true heroes of this story.

What INTERPOL experienced can be described as nothing other than a cyber-war against the world's largest police organization.

Yet it is not enough to be proud that we defended ourselves and our member countries from this global cyber-attack.

We need to ask ourselves: what lessons have we learned, and which of these lessons can we share with our National Central Bureaus?

First, these attacks confirm what I personally witnessed in visiting 152 of our member countries: that is, how important the name INTERPOL and the police community we represent have become.

Anonymous described INTERPOL as 'useless' in one of its statements to its followers and the media. Yet, at the same time, Anonymous converged its full global firepower on INTERPOL.

Why? Thanks to the fine work of the police in our member countries, of our NCBs and here at IPSG, Anonymous now knows that its members and supporters can be unmasked. With that, it becomes a weakened idea and entity.

These cyber-attacks were nothing more than retaliation to operation Unmask – coordinated via the INTERPOL General Secretariat, NCBs and specialized units across two regions. Conducted in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Spain, the operation resulted in the arrest of 25 suspected hackers linked to Anonymous.

Let me compliment once again police and prosecutors from these countries for their fine work, as well as the other countries involved, where preparations for actions in the field are still underway.

Yet candidly speaking, the success of Operation Unmask should hardly come as a surprise.

For years, INTERPOL and our NCBs have been collaborating on successful operations against crimes ranging from human smuggling and fugitives, to counterfeiting and pharmaceutical crime.

Another important lesson is that INTERPOL is becoming more visible and relevant in the eyes of police in our 190 member countries.

In 2011 alone, officers worldwide have accessed our tools on average 1,600 times per minute, leading to more than 290,000 hits a year. Look at the growth in searches depicted in this image. In 2003 our member countries averaged just three searches per minute.

More and more countries are seeking and installing INTERPOL tools and services at their borders and still others are giving and asking for mobile access to INTERPOL databases and data services.

In addition, more member countries are seeking our physical presence on their soil to assist them.

Take a look at this image, to see how requests for and delivery of INTERPOL's support on the ground covers the globe. South America, Central America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Over the past two years, more than 40 INTERPOL specialized teams have been deployed to secure major events or in the aftermath of natural disasters and attacks.

Simply put, from Operation Unmask and the rest of our work we learned that INTERPOL has become a pivotal component of the daily policing activities of our member countries.

Indeed, demand for our services has never been greater in our history. Even more striking is that this increased demand is now also coming – and growing – from beyond our membership.

The UN Security Council has called the international community to work via INTERPOL against maritime piracy.

Its Counter Terrorism Committee defined the extension of I-24/7 in Western Africa a priority.

INTERPOL is featured in the Stockholm Program, the EU five-year plan for Justice and Home Affairs - and the Hon. Cecilia Malmström, European Union Commissioner for Home Affairs, will honor us with her presence to deliver the closing remarks of this very meeting.

Also, last October the European Parliament called upon member countries to work even more closely with INTERPOL.

And as 50 Heads of State convene in Seoul, South Korea for the next Nuclear Security Summit, INTERPOL will be sitting at the table - at their request - as a key player in the prevention of nuclear trafficking and terrorism.

Dear Heads of NCBs,

All this speaks by itself of what our National Central Bureaus have been able to achieve and demonstrate to their governments and citizens throughout the years.

What INTERPOL now lives every day is what we dreamed of 10 years ago, in the aftermath of 9/11.

Back then, INTERPOL found itself at a strategic crossroads: either to stay content with the status quo, or to take a leap and transform itself to face a changed world, new threats and new opportunities.

We – you, our NCBs - strongly supported this General Secretariat's desire to transform INTERPOL. To make us relevant and accessible to police at your bureaus and beyond, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all over the world.

With you, we dared to explore ideas and bring about a reality that few would have dreamed possible.

And to do so, our member countries then decided to invest in our future.

Between 2002 and 2003, statutory contributions grew by 23 per cent, opening the door to the new INTERPOL. Today's INTERPOL.

That was the beginning of a new stage of our history, one that saw our NCBs at the center of INTERPOL's transformation, and one that never lost its momentum.

Whether it is by raising the importance of our NCBs, as the linchpin between our systems and thousands of new users of our tools;

Or

Through the groundbreaking opportunity for NCBs to directly input or cancel information in our records through I-Link;

Or

By allowing our Heads of NCBs to avoid red tape when travelling on police matters with an INTERPOL Travel Document recognized by 37 countries around the globe....

...we have always known that INTERPOL's evolution had to be built upon our NCBs and their role.

And in the midst of that transformation, we felt the need for special advisers on our side.

That is how in 2005 we first conceived this annual conference, as a vibrant conversation with those who knew firsthand both the criminal threats that were out there, and how INTERPOL's tools and service could best address them.

We knew that nothing could be more powerful than police leaders sharing experience and exchanging ideas to make INTERPOL better.

And on this day, the Organization is at yet another strategic crossroads in its history.

In 2010, our members unanimously asked INTERPOL to start building our capacity against future threats like cybercrime, by establishing the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore.

In parallel, more than a decade since the beginning of a new millennium, the international community still struggles to cope with long-known threats like international illicit trade and smuggling.

Left unchecked at a time of global economic hardship, these threats may potentially undermine the future of global growth, even resulting— in the words of some analysts – in 'geopolitical black holes.' The call to secure our borders and our supply chains has never been stronger. And it is a call INTERPOL must respond to, if we intend to remain loyal to our mandate.

Yet our finest hour, with soaring demand for our services and unprecedented international visibility, comes at a time when many countries are facing an economic crisis.

As your Secretary General, I submit that if we cannot find a way to meet the growing demand of our member countries, we will become irrelevant. We will be replaced.

Even as some of our member countries are late in paying their statutory contributions, we and the Executive Committee believe we should make it a priority to allow access to our tools, services and regional bureaus' support, while enforcing our financial rules after careful examination of each case.

But like in 2002/2003, once again, we have important choices to make.

Do we accept the status quo...or do we transform the way that we do business and the way that we finance ourselves?

Once again, this General Secretariat, with the support of our Executive Committee, believes that INTERPOL should find additional resources. In doing so, it should pursue innovation.

During this meeting, you will be given a few glimpses of how we intend to transform ourselves.

You will hear how we will seek to ensure the quality of the information we provide to the frontlines of police, as the number of its users, and the speed at which they can act upon it grow exponentially.

How we intend to make you, our NCBs, a pivotal element of an even stronger, yet flexible and effective, INTERPOL data management system.

But equally importantly, you will hear how we want to make these innovations- and those that will follow - possible and financially sustainable.

You will hear how we plan to get new project-based funding to be combined with our member countries' mandatory statutory contributions and bring to a new level our capacity to respond to the demand we face.

Over the past few years, we have worked hard in this direction. The huge efforts of our staff will allow INTERPOL to rely over the next decade on more than 45 million EUR in funds raised from external donors. These are funds that will directly finance specialized projects to the benefit of our member countries.

Yet looking at our future, we know we will need to do even more. We know we will need to identify new innovative and sustainable funding streams.

In our future, we see the opportunity for the financial, travel and tourism industry to verify the identity of their customers through our databases in exchange for a fee, in full compliance with our rules and integrity values.

We see consumers around the world able to check whether a product is counterfeit in real time, thanks to the INTERPOL Global Register that we wish to create. Google already has expressed serious interest in helping us design this tool.

We also have identified special sponsorship events hosted by our member countries where private or charity entities will be able to contribute to INTERPOL's activities and mandate.

Events such as the first ever INTERPOL Gala for a Safer World, scheduled for next October in Baku, Azerbaijan, when more than 20,000 people are expected to attend.

Or like a One-Day International Cricket Match in support of INTERPOL where the reigning World Cup Champion, India has agreed to compete. We are currently searching for a second country.

These are just a few snapshots of the opportunities INTERPOL is considering. We believe that they will generate millions of euros.

These are new and unexplored opportunities.

As such, they will carry risks. They will raise questions.

That is why more than ever, we need to hear the voice of our NCBs as we mold the INTERPOL of tomorrow together.

Without your insight, we will be unable to achieve the transformation that we seek.

Dear Heads of NCBs,

Clearly, our plans are ambitious. We are asking all of you to join us in a long, at times complex journey.

But I have no doubt in my mind that it will be a successful one. It could never be otherwise...

...with such dedicated staff at our NCBs, General Secretariat, and Regional Bureaus;

..with an Executive Committee that has never been stronger in its resolve to guide us, while watching over the interests of the whole membership.

Ms Balestrazzi, Mr Kawai and Mr Williams are perfect examples of this, both in their police executives experience and in their key roles in our Strategic Development and Finances Sub-committees, and in the IGCI Working Group.

And, of course, none of what we have achieved and will achieve could have ever been possible without a President like Mr Khoo Boon Hui.

This will be his last Heads of NCB Conference as INTERPOL President.

President Khoo, your relentless efforts in promoting INTERPOL and the work of our NCBs around the world over the past six years, first as Vice President for Asia and then as President, have set an example for us all in how to pursue our goals, no matter how ambitious.

I look at that example, at the people gathered in this room today and at our common history, and only one thought comes to mind:

Once again, INTERPOL will innovate. INTERPOL will evolve. INTERPOL will succeed.

Thank you.