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REMARKS

by

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ID World Abu Dhabi

***Modern Identification Technologies: Advancing the First Line of
Defence***

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General Ahmed Nasir ALRAISI,

Senior officials from the UAE,

Madame Sophie de la Giroday

Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamou aleikoum.

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here with you for this ID World Conference in Abu Dhabi. I had the fortune of participating in last year's event, and I did not hesitate to accept once again to participate in this event. Once again, Sophie de la Giroday and her team have put together an impressive list of participants and an exciting agenda.

As I hope will be clear from my remarks, I strongly believe that in this world and age, rapid and effective identity verification based on innovation will be THE cornerstone of our security.

This makes the opportunity to discuss these issues with industry leaders an invaluable one. Particularly so, in a country such as the United Arab Emirates – world renowned for its outstanding hospitality and innovative vision.

Let me also commend His Excellency Sheik Saif Bin Zayyed Al NAYHAN for the steadfast support lent to INTERPOL, and the world, on matters of international police cooperation – an individual truly dedicated to ensuring the safety, of the citizens of the UAE and of the world.

INTERPOL is an organization that, by nature, must constantly think of innovative ways to support its member countries. As the world's largest international police organization, we are confronted daily by the cunning of criminals trying to circumvent the safeguards implemented by sovereign states to protect themselves, their economies, and their people.

In itself, INTERPOL was a groundbreaking innovation at a time when law enforcement executives from a few countries decided that borders could not be left as weapons in the hands of criminals. Those borders were being crossed more and more often by criminals. However, back then, criminals had to be physically present to commit most crimes.

Almost a century later, INTERPOL includes 190 member countries, in a world embracing more than seven billion people, speaking more than 7,000 different languages. A world where borders are still being crossed by crime, but with key differences. Speed. Mass access

to air travel. And, most troubling, physical presence has stopped being a prerequisite to threaten safety and security.

In a world where one can transfer millions of dollars with a click of a mouse; where one can check-in for a flight while sitting in a taxi; and where billions of bytes of personal information are displayed and exchanged every second, modern identification technologies have become invaluable.

Law enforcement, public authorities and, increasingly, strategic private actors must also be able to ascertain that individuals are who they purport to be – both on- and off-line; Simply put, the speed at which borders are crossed and the price to be paid in case of failed identity verification urgently demand that our first line of defense be constantly advanced.

First and foremost, this means ensuring that those legitimately crossing borders are rapidly identified as such, and are allowed to reach their destinations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last year at this very same event, I discussed a global challenge of the 21st century – migration – and presented an idea to help countries facilitate the movement of trusted migrant workers between different countries and economies.

That was the rationale behind the concept of a Globally Verifiable Identity Card (GVIC) for Overseas Workers, for an individual screened against international criminal databases to ensure that no serious or pertinent criminal record of them exists, and then issued with a secure, advanced ID card certifying that status.

INTERPOL started refining that concept in partnership with the Association for International Mobility. Today, I am happy to announce that the World Bank has expressed its interest to explore that initiative with our partner, confirming the value of that concept.

Yet this idea is one that can be applied to other areas. In a world where terrorism is a continual threat, and where terrorists are targeting locations that will have a far-reaching impact, we cannot afford to leave critical national infrastructures vulnerable.

With the daily management – or even ownership - of increasing numbers of critical national infrastructures being farmed out to private entities, it is becoming more and more difficult to ensure that employees, and other third-parties with access, are who they say they are.

For nationalized structures, employee due diligence is already in place for many countries, with national criminal record checks being carried out as standard operating procedure. But with privatization, and increasingly diverse workforces worldwide, carrying out personnel background checks has become a huge challenge for the industry.

While distinct from the GV Identity Card for Overseas Workers, private companies involved in critical infrastructures may also benefit from the concept of screening prospective employees against INTERPOL's databases. Imagine. The top 10 airlines employ more than half a million staff – the sheer size and turn-over of personnel within the entire air industry is phenomenal.

Airport and airline employees – just one example of many possible beneficiaries - could be issued with a Globally Verifiable Identity when recruited into the industry for the first time.

From then on, when transferring from one airline to another or one airport to another, they would hold a verified and established identity. This would allow for quicker recruitment; increased mobility within the industry; and the assurance that only authorized and trusted personnel have access to restricted premises.

The potential is huge, and it serves a simple principle: those already successfully having their identity verified and screened should be allowed to carry out their duties as easily as possible.

INTERPOL was faced with this dilemma before, and in order to manage it we resorted once again to innovation to ensure effective identification.

Since 2002, we have been deploying specialized teams at the request of our member countries to support security preparations for major international events, or investigations and victim identification in the aftermath of terrorist incidents and natural disasters.

Systematically, our multi-national teams would face substantial red tape in crossing borders, when they were urgently needed at destination.

That is why two years ago, at the occasion of an ICAO symposium in Montréal, Canada, I first spoke publicly about the idea of creating an INTERPOL Travel Document. This highly secure document, which has so far been recognised by 37 INTERPOL member countries, not only permits law enforcement officials travelling on INTERPOL-related matters to benefit from a special visa status, but can also be used to positively identify the official both physically and logically.

Now when responding to a request for aid from a member country – for instance, following a natural disaster when a Disaster Victim Identification team is needed – we will be able to choose the team based solely on their expertise, without focusing on their ease of entering a country with little notice. When communicating sensitive information to them, we can be assured that they are who they claim to be.

Yet if we truly seek to secure our borders, we still need a substantial dose of realism. We all know that in most cases, the prevention of a threat from crossing a border will depend on a law enforcement official making the right decision in a few seconds. And at INTERPOL, we know that such a decision hinges on the various pieces of intelligence at the right place, at the right time, and not always available to the law enforcement official making the decision.

That is how in 2005, INTERPOL developed technical solutions known as MIND/FIND to bring the tools of international law enforcement to police officers wherever they might have a need. MIND/FIND technology enables law enforcement officers to check the 40 million + records in INTERPOL global databases such as the Nominal database; the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database ; and the INTERPOL Stolen Motor Vehicle database, directly at airports, borders and other remote locations.

We started deployment with a single country – Switzerland. Today, there are now 103 MIND/FIND deployments worldwide.

Before its deployment, our databases had been accessed on average five times per minute across the world. Last year, that figure reached 1,603 searches per minute, resulting in 290,000 positive hits.

You may wonder what each ‘hit’ implies. Let me give you an example.

In January 2010, five passengers carrying Swedish passports were prevented from transiting through Trinidad and Tobago to St. Maarten. This, due to multiple hits in INTERPOL’s global SLTD database. Investigations also revealed that the passports were stolen and had been acquired in Venezuela. Travelling with the group, composed of Iranian nationals, was an individual our databases revealed as being wanted by the Netherlands and suspected of human trafficking charges.

No such information would have been obtained without the deployment of MIND solutions in Port-of-Spain. Multiple individuals would have unlawfully gained entry into the Caribbean. And one more (suspected) human smuggler would have accomplished their mission.

Now imagine the potential if that same information was available as a criminal tries to take the first steps to commit a crime – opening a bank account to launder money or boarding a plane to illegally enter another country – rather than after the fact.

That potential is what prompted INTERPOL to explore the idea of providing select industries with the opportunity to screen customers for due diligence against our stolen and lost travel document database in exchange for a fee.

Of course, we would not allow the private sector to access the sensitive police information shared by our member countries. However, they could be simply notified if a passport or national ID card presented by a customer is or is not considered valid by the country that issued it.

This idea has already found interest in the travel and financial industries. INTERPOL possesses the technical solution and now is working to identify strategic partners – in banking institutions, airlines, and multi-national corporations to determine if and how such a service could be best provided.

The goal, once again, is to have a win-win outcome where the first line of defense is further extended, and key industries are supported in the protection of their customers and business.

Unfortunately, threats to both of these will not come only from individuals seeking to commit a crime. In some cases, the threat will be in an everyday product purchased at an unbelievably competitive price. What would be more difficult to see, however, is that the non-monetary cost of that good may be enormous.

The global illicit trade of products, such as pharmaceuticals, luxury items, firearms and even something as ordinary as cigarettes, is a phenomenon that puts our economy, safety, health, and lives at risk.

When one looks at medical products alone, we are talking of an illicit trade with an estimated value of more than 200 billion USD per year, where, in some parts of the world, 30 per cent of medical products are counterfeit.

We are talking about millions of heartbreaking stories each of which can result in a tragic loss of life.

We are talking about Verónica Díaz from Viedma, Argentina, who died of liver failure on 23 December 2004 at the age of 22 after unwittingly receiving a highly toxic dose of counterfeit iron preparation to treat mild anemia.

Just like our borders, in a globalized world our supply chains urgently need to be secured. Customers need to be able once again to achieve positive identification of the goods they buy.

INTERPOL stands ready to become a global channel to make this possible. Our vision is that of a Global Register able to allow law enforcement, the private sector, and even the general public to collaborate to combat the illicit trade of goods.

By bringing together data provided by industries on genuine products, the INTERPOL Global Register will allow law enforcement officials and the general public to detect, using their smartphone, whether a seized or purchased product is genuine or not. Such an initiative will close many of the loopholes that allow for illicit trade – the difficulty to detect it and the inability of the general population to self-regulate. Our hope is that this simple, yet powerful technical solution will potentially help save millions of lives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In today's modern world, new approaches must be developed, extending beyond the traditional remit of law enforcement, to best provide both the public and private sectors with the means to verify the authenticity of identity documents and of products.

INTERPOL's ultimate vision is that of a connected, and an increasingly safer world, and I am confident that together we can make this happen.

I wish you all a very successful conference. Thank you.