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Address

by

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INTERPOL Secretary General

Visit by the Hon. Janet Napolitano
US Department of Homeland Security

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Madame Secretary,

Distinguished guests,

Dear colleagues,

Good morning.

Let me sincerely thank you, Madame Secretary, and your distinguished delegation for accepting to be here with us today.

Dear colleagues, this is an historic visit.

For the first time ever, we have the honour to host the Secretary entrusted with overseeing more than 200,000 officials in the Department of Homeland Security, with the safeguarding of more than 300 million US citizens and the protection of the tens of millions of international visitors to the US each year – including Heads of State from INTERPOL's 190 member countries.

With such responsibilities, you can understand why her desire to visit INTERPOL Headquarters – and her having taken the time to do so – would by itself make this a very special day for us.

But, there is much more to celebrate in having the Hon. Janet Napolitano among us today.

Already at the ripe old age of 17 years, she was named by her high school class to be the most likely to succeed.

Four years later, she proved her young classmates correct, by becoming the first woman to graduate Number 1 in her class in Santa Clara University's then 120+ year history.

Thereafter, she became the first woman to serve as Arizona's Attorney General.

Yet Janet Napolitano never allowed herself to be defined by her gender alone.

After being elected Governor of Arizona, Time magazine named her as one of the five best governors in the United States...

...and Forbes magazine now ranks her among the top 10 most influential women worldwide.

On a more personal note, Janet Napolitano is an avid reader, has a great sense of humour; plays a mean guitar; she has not only hiked mountains in the US but also in the Himalayas, and has climbed Mount Kilimanjaro not once but twice in her life.

Madame Secretary, let me share something else with my staff, which will endear you even further in their hearts and minds.

Janet Napolitano has been able to lead such a successful life without ever having her own personal email account. And I know for a fact that my staff would give anything to have a Secretary General without a personal email account!

With all of the above in mind, we know for sure that with such a special guest, this day will be remembered forever here at INTERPOL General Secretariat Headquarters in Lyon and in our Regional Bureaus and offices around the world.

Madame Secretary, let me once again welcome you to our home – which for as long as you wish, you should also consider your home.

It is rare that any Minister or Cabinet level officer come to her post with the qualifications of Janet Napolitano.

As an Attorney General and Governor of Arizona – a border-state in the US – she witnessed first-hand the challenges stemming from international and cross-border crime.

As US Attorney for the District of Arizona she oversaw an office of more than 90 prosecutors and the successful prosecution of more than 6,000 criminals, more than any other federal prosecutor in Arizona's history.

Yes, Secretary Napolitano brought to her post a wealth of experience, a keen intellect, and an unmatched commitment to public service, when she was appointed to lead an agency which is a natural ally of INTERPOL, becoming the first woman to head the US Department of Homeland Security – or DHS as it is known.

INTERPOL and DHS share the single catalyst moment that helped shape our organizations into what they are today.

It was the day almost 3,000 victims from more than 90 nations perished at the hands of terror on September 11, 2001.

In that aftermath, the United States resolved in an unprecedented move to bring together 22 agencies and almost 170,000 officers to serve a single imperative: to be ready, no matter what, whenever and wherever the next threat would loom.

That same imperative led INTERPOL to radically change its structure and philosophy, to evolve into what today serves 190 countries worldwide with state-of-the-art tools and services, and with what we proudly boast as the world's most dedicated, able and diverse international law enforcement workforce.

INTERPOL and DHS were destined to develop the vibrant relationship we experience today. A relationship which can be constantly seen at play – concretely, in the field.

We can see it every single time a visitor crosses the US borders, having his or her name and identity document screened against INTERPOL's databases by officers from US Customs & Border Protection.

This is occurring at a rate of 400 times per minute and more than 170 million times a year, making the US and its Department of Homeland Security the No. 1 global user of our tools and services, resulting in more than 40,000 hits per year.

The strength of this alliance was also clearly visible the second agents from DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested Wayne Corliss in Union City, New Jersey, in 2008, taking a dangerous child sex predator off the streets of the US and the rest of the world, only 48 hours after a global appeal was launched by INTERPOL for his identification.

And today, the US and its Department of Homeland Security are No. 1 among our member countries in identifying child sex abusers and rescuing child victims via INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation image database.

It is no surprise, then, that DHS also recently involved INTERPOL in Project Global Shield, to protect the global supply chain by preventing the theft or illegal diversion of precursor chemicals potentially used to make improvised explosive devices.

Yet INTERPOL's tools and services can only be effective if INTERPOL can recruit, develop and maintain the finest workforce.

With us today, Madame Secretary – either live or via video conferencing – we have law enforcement officials from 93 INTERPOL member countries.

Among them, we proudly have one of our best experts in counterfeit and security documents – US Secret Service Agent Jamil DARWISH. We also rely on an exceptional Chairperson for our international Group of Experts on Police Training – Director Connie PATRICK from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC).

Additionally, just last week an agent from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement was among the officers representing the 190 agencies and 100 member countries involved in Operation Pangea V, targeting the illicit online sale of medicines and resulting in some 80 arrests and the seizure of USD 10.5 million in illicit medical products worldwide.

And, finally, the engines that keep INTERPOL going daily are the National Central Bureaus from our sovereign 190 member countries – and with us today is DHS’s own Shawn BRAY, Director of INTERPOL Washington.

Secretary Napolitano,

Your presence today reaffirms the trust and importance that the US and DHS place on the work of INTERPOL and its fundamental principle – in your own words, that *“we can't be secure at home without strong partnerships abroad, and vice versa”*.

Today, INTERPOL renews its commitment to support the US and all of its agencies in their quest to keep your country and the world safe from international crime and criminals.

As symbolized by the wings breaking the circle on the seal of your agency, DHS believes in breaking with the past and relying on innovation to meet its mandate.

I assure you that in this endeavor, you will have INTERPOL at your side.

We stand ready to work with DHS as its groundbreaking Blue Campaign against Human Trafficking continues to successfully combine advocacy, enforcement, victims' assistance and private sector partnership against slavery.

As we launch our new INTERPOL Border Management Working Group, we will seek the expertise of DHS – as a global example of how the systematic use of INTERPOL tools and services can become the cornerstone of a successful border security strategy.

Finally, we look forward to joining our efforts in tackling emerging global threats such as cybercrime, as INTERPOL develops its state-of-the-art Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore.

This is our pledge to you today.

A more secure US homeland. A safer world.

This is a vision that we share with each and every one of our 190 member countries.

Dear Colleagues and Distinguished Guests, it is now my privilege and honour to present you, the Secretary of the US Department of Homeland Security, the Honorable Janet Napolitano.