

Your Excellencies (H.E. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy, Italian Minister of the Interior, Anna Maria Cancellieri)

Esteemed colleagues ministers of the interior, foreign affairs, justice and security

Mr. President Khoo Boon Hui,

Mr. Secretary General Noble,

Respected Heads of National Bureaus of Interpol, Representatives of International Organizations and Observers,

Members of the Diplomatic Body,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. Introduction

Please allow me to extend my greetings to you in my capacity as President of the Government and the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, and to thank Italy, our host, for the invitation, kind welcome and outstandingly successful organization of both this 81st Interpol's General Assembly and the Second Ministerial Meeting (the First meeting was held in 2009 in Singapore), on this present and for all of us important topic: "Challenges for Police facing contemporary criminal violence".

At this moment the Republic of Serbia is a EU candidate country. We have already started with the preparations for the next step in the EU integration process-getting a date for the beginning of the EU accession negotiations. Our country will continue, with undiminished energy, with its reform processes and progress on the road to the EU. The Republic of Serbia is determined in its intention to develop capacities and potentials for efficient fight against all forms of organized crime through its strategic approach.

Harmonization of the Republic of Serbia with EU standards in all areas is of extreme importance for the region but for Europe as a whole also and represents a strategic commitment which implies the acceptance of European values and standards in a whole array of areas.

2. Topic

Today, we are contemplating the role of the police in the suppression of criminal violence with a view to enabling the rule of law. This role so far was not an easy one for the police officers in my country, the country which not long time ago experienced one of the most severe forms of criminal violence i.e. the assassination of the highest ranking state official, the President of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2003, the country which found itself with the heritage of armed conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, tasks pertaining to the finding of perpetrators of most serious war crimes, deep economic crisis, refugees, etc.

Security threats that Serbia is facing are identical to the threats in all countries from the region, as well as in the EU countries, which calls for new responses in policing and new forms of cooperation.

The effects of criminal offences with elements of violence, in its nature, seek wider public reaction, they don't affect only those against whom these acts were directed but they influence members of their families, the society and the state as a whole. Very often, violence is a synonym for the whole spectrum of notions, such as: crime, torture, terror, abuse of power and similar.

In the course of investigation of these acts we are investing efforts with a view to improving performance and maximizing efficiency. The State response to violence must be swift, adequate and effective. In order to achieve this all stakeholders must be involved- the state authorities but the non-governmental sector as well. In this way we are achieving inter-disciplinarity, as an indispensable precondition for efficient reaction.

The Police is a state body which undoubtedly has a key role in confronting crime, both in its primary role i.e. its repressive practice, and in its preventive actions. The repressive mechanism as a rule steps in after a criminal act had been committed. Repression is entrusted to specialized state authorities and their correlation is one of the main success factors in achieving the set goals in the fight against crime.

Over the last few years in cooperation with other state administration authorities and other social stakeholders, our Police is participating more intensively in the creation and realization of the crime prevention concept. The crime prevention concept and development of community policing is set into an adequate strategic framework of the police reform in the Republic of Serbia until 2016.

As an example of important activities in this regard I will mention the continuous engagement on suppression of illegal possession of fire-arms and their organized smuggling and trade.

In addition to the well-known forms of organized crime, terrorism and other most serious criminal offences with alarming elements of violence, there are also other but nonetheless similarly severe forms of violent crimes creating public disturbance. Particularly alarming are cases of violent crimes among youth, school population, domestic violence, violence at sports and other public events (the so called hooliganism). Violence at sporting events, regardless of the fact whether it happens on the playing area or field or in their vicinity or whether the sporting event itself is a direct cause of violence but the reasons for violence are much deeper and complex than the mere fact that one team won or lost the game, recently has become a widespread phenomena, more as a rule than as an exception. I would like to remind you of certain examples, one of them being a tragic loss of a fan's life, the case of a French fan Brice Taton whose death was a result of a clash with soccer hooligans in the center of Belgrade in 2009, which justifiably disturbed not only our and the French public but the public worldwide. Reaction of the police and the judiciary in Serbia was adequate and perpetrators of this crime were convicted which launched a broader action against hooliganism in relation to sporting events. I would also like to mention attacks directed against Serbian journalists where the police reacted correspondingly, and the adequate response of the police in connection to the football game between the FC Rad and FC Novi Pazar where 150 fans were prosecuted due to nationalistic messages on banners at the football game. Subsequently, the National Council for prevention of violence and misbehavior at sporting events adopted the Action Plan for

prevention of violence in sport as well as the amendments and consolidations of relevant laws. In line with this, more strict penal policy has been envisaged and acceleration of court proceedings. Our authorities will undertake adequate measures after the reports from the Football Association of Serbia and the UEFA in relation to violent behavior at the recently held game of the national youth football teams between England and Serbia. Establishment of a National Football Information Center for fight against violence at stadiums (hooliganism etc.) is a new solution based on international experience.

In regard to the more and more frequent pressures on the representatives of the “Gay-Straight Alliance”, police officers in line with their powers and in accordance with provisions of the Anti-discrimination Law are efficiently protecting the constitutionally guaranteed integrity of all citizens, particularly in cases where such harassment was motivated primarily by their group affiliation. In this regard there have been certain amendments to the Criminal Law by introduction of new criminal offences which penalize such behavior.

Freedom of assembly is an integral part of freedom of expression, one of the basic principles of every democratic society and a segment of the core fundamental human rights and freedoms. However, freedom of assembly isn't absolute and there are certain limitations as laid down in Article 11 of the European Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 54 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.

Justified grounds for the limitation of freedom of assembly in that context would be a potential danger to public order. There are cases where different groups of citizens who desire to communicate different, often opposite ideas, gather at the same time and place thus creating extremely potent ground for mutual conflicts. During “counterdemonstrations” the police respects the rights of all citizens and tries to provide equal opportunities for everyone to express their views unless they relate to incitement to national, racial or religious intolerance and hatred.

The Police is maximizing its efforts in providing security during public gatherings. In the past 10 years, in the course of securing public gatherings characterized as high risk assemblies, apart from sporting events, 400 police officers of the Republic of Serbia were injured. From 2006 until 2011 in the performance of their duties, 7 police officers lost their lives and 2500 were injured. Assaults on police officers in charge of law enforcement or even a threat that they might be assaulted is something that isn't tolerated in any country in the world. These attacks are forms of violent attacks and the most severe attack on the institution and the authority whose particular task is to provide for the rule of law. A well known example is the example of police response at the “Pride Parade 2010” of LGBT community when the Police protected the participants from the attack of hooligans during which the city suffered great material damage and a great number of police officers were reported injured.

3. Rule of Law

The rule of law as a universal category is the ideal of the whole community and for this reason it prevails in the work of the police but also in the work of all our state authorities. Reaction of the society to violence is present not only in regular situations but also in certain emergencies when specialized measures are being undertaken with a view to protecting civil rights and freedoms.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of the Interior put a special emphasis on measures designed for: safeguarding children from all forms of abuse, neglect, misuse and violence, suppression of domestic violence and violence in partner-relations, enhancement of gender equality and improvement of the position of women and protection of minorities.

The Police of the Republic of Serbia in the performance of its work is observing the principles of general international law, among these principles is the principle of prohibition of torture which has a special status. This concretely applies to perpetrators of criminal acts including perpetrators of violent crimes.

Even with all the challenges and notwithstanding the severity of the committed offence, the perpetrators are guaranteed all rights proscribed by the Constitution and law and any form of violence against them is strictly forbidden and penalized. These individuals are treated in a humane way with full respect of their dignity.

Fight against violent crime demands specialized education of police officers and activities which are tailor made for these new security risks.

Based on the international cooperation to date, through professional support and assistance in various projects in all lines of work of our police we were able to reach a satisfactory level of education of police officers in the international cooperation field.

We also put a great emphasis on cooperation with Europol, Eurojust and FRONTEX and other European agencies in our future perspective of fighting against crime.

In the final phase of the reform of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, within the final advancement towards european integrations, we envisaged new organizational forms for international police cooperation with Interpol, Europol and other regional organizations, bodies and fora (Frontex, Olaf, Sirene bureau, SIS, SECI Center (SELEC), Secretariat of the Convention for Police Cooperation in SEEC, Geneva Center for the Democratic control of Armed Forces DCAF, The Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative MARRI) through the International Law Enforcement Coordination Units ILECU, through the conclusion of international agreements on police cooperation, numerous international conferences and launching cooperation initiatives.

4. Conclusion

I would like to conclude my address by saying that in order to efficiently confront violent crime it is necessary to have adequately organized reaction of the society which would at the same time be in accordance with the law.

Commitment of the Republic of Serbia in the fight against violence is evident through its reform processes in the area of social and health protection, education, justice and the police.

I would particularly like to underline the role of the international police cooperation.

Interpol, through its mission, vision and outstanding efforts invested by the leadership of this organization prepares all police services around the world for the challenges of the 21st Century. Thanks to its unique structure, operative possibilities and data bases, it efficiently coordinates international police cooperation aimed at prevention and suppression of crime. Our country actively participates in all Interpol programs and utilizes all operative means designed within. These are universal tools used by the police in suppression of the most violent criminal offences particularly.

With great interest, we are following on the development of the Global Interpol Complex which is currently being built in Singapore which will design new systems and tools for younger generations of the police who need to fulfill the goals set by justice and security of the world faced with abuse of cyber technologies.

All our efforts which I mentioned, but mostly- adequate legal framework, networking with other state authorities predominantly with the courts and judiciary and police education, represent a base for the fight against crime in our country and I would dare say in the region, having in mind our cooperation so far.

In the end I would like to greet all present ministers, the highest Interpol representatives, representatives of National Bureaus of Interpol of all member states and to wish them successful work during the General Assembly and adoption of good and right decisions which will contribute to future cooperation of police services in the world

Thank you for your attention!