



State of the Organization Address

by

Ronald K. Noble

INTERPOL Secretary General

82nd INTERPOL General Assembly session

21 October 2013

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia

Madame La Presidente,

Hon. Juan Carlos PINZÓN BUENO, Minister of National Defence of Colombia,

Honorable Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Interior, Justice and Security,

Maj. Gen. Rodolfo PALOMINO LÓPEZ, Director General of National Police from Colombia,

Distinguished Chiefs of Police,

Dear Members of INTERPOL Executive Committee,

Former INTERPOL President and Senior Deputy Minister of Home Affairs for Singapore,

Special guest Europol Director Rob Wainwright,

Dear Heads of INTERPOL National Central Bureaus,

Dear colleagues from INTERPOL's General Secretariat Headquarters in Lyon, Regional Bureaus, Representative Offices and National Central Bureaus worldwide, following for the first time in history this event live in our four official languages through the INTERPOL Secure Cloud;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Buenos Dias, Good morning, Bonjour, A Salaam Alekoum.

As I stand before you today, I already feel the power of the moment that INTERPOL and you, our member countries, are about to live.

One year from now, the Executive Committee will present this General Assembly with its sole candidate to succeed me as Secretary General of INTERPOL.

So, for all intents and purposes, this will be the last State of the Organization Address delivered by me – where I will be around to see your decisions come to life and mature in the future as your Secretary General.

A future which, in just a year, will see INTERPOL celebrate several milestones.

Next year will mark the 100 year anniversary of the first meeting of judicial police in the City State of Monaco, where the very idea of INTERPOL was born in 1914 and where we will celebrate our General Assembly in 2014. That same year, our Global Complex for Innovation will open its doors in another City State, Singapore, almost halfway around the world to help our member countries prevent and investigate cyber-threats, in close cooperation with Europol and the European Cyber Crime Centre.

We are honoured to have Europol's Director Rob Wainwright give a keynote address tomorrow morning.

Next year, INTERPOL's General Secretariat headquarters will be celebrating the first quarter of a century since its move to our permanent home in Lyon, France.

Following the unanimous decision of our Executive Committee two days ago, the INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World will have opened its first offices in Geneva and Paris with His Serene

Highness Albert II, Sovereign Prince of Monaco, as the Chair of the Honorary Board of Founders and with Elias Murr, the former Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of Defense of Lebanon, as its Chairman of the Board and Founder.

This Foundation will bring to life a decision taken by this General Assembly 15 years ago, and it will reduce the burdens and potential conflicts of interest that arise when your Secretary General is engaged in fundraising.

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2014 will be the year the World will stop and stare in awe at a fascinating tale.

That of an idea born out of the needs of police in the field of a changed world, nurtured by the determination of a handful of police leaders, and turned into a global family of brothers and sisters in law enforcement who, a century later, are now entering together into a new era of collaboration for a safer world.

A family bigger in its size and reach. Stronger and even more determined as a global player. Yet identical in its loyalty to the core of its existence. I speak of the very essence of INTERPOL, which I have been able to live and breathe on a daily basis during my three mandates as your Secretary General.

Some would call it a recurring theme. Others a modus operandi.

I see it as the very blood running through our veins, as an Organization. It is what has kept us alive, relevant and unique through almost a century of changing borders, emerging criminal threats, amazing achievements and senseless tragedies experienced by humankind.

That essence is constant, cutting-edge innovation.

Conceived by INTERPOL. Designed by INTERPOL. Delivered by INTERPOL at the frontlines of our member countries, in your daily battle against crime and in defence of your citizens.

By definition, innovation will find skeptics on its way. Believe it or not...the strength of INTERPOL is that you can express your doubts as strongly as you wish. They are welcome. Why? Because your skepticism and doubts have made our end products better.

So, keep saying:

"It can't be done".

"There are no precedents".

"It's unrealistic".

"Impossible".

Many among us can still hear those or similar comments in our minds. The list of instances where this happened at INTERPOL is endless. Yet they all saw INTERPOL improve the way we innovated. A handful of images, engraved in our memories, are still there to remind us.

The decision by this General Assembly to endorse the cancellation of the Atlas Project eleven years ago because it did not rely on the Internet and because it tied our hands to only one private sector company; What do we have today? 20,000+ users accessing our I-24/7 network; a record of one billion searches in our databases last year – shattering the previous record via MIND and FIND.

Or – the 740 million passports you screened worldwide in 2012, and the 60,000 stolen or lost travel documents you exposed, while guarding your borders or as part of your investigations. Last night Ms Jolene Sullens from the US reminded me how in the beginning, many countries did not believe the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database and MIND/FIND would work. It took Switzerland alone in 2005 to prove to us all what was possible with SLTD and FIND, and today we can't satisfy the demand of our member countries to link them up to MIND/FIND.

Or – what about the victim of a gang rape in Norway, finding closure when two of her alleged aggressors were identified with a hit against the 137,000 profiles shared via our DNA Gateway... something thought impossible when it was first conceived.

And what about the more than a million fake and illicit medicines taken off the market and the almost 14,000 rogue pharmacies taken off the Internet in a single week? Or customs, health regulators, national police and the private sector from 99 countries working side-by-side, under the INTERPOL banner of Operation Pangea VI?

Finally, what to say about each of the 182 Incident Response and Major Events Supports Teams deployed since 2002; the families of victims from one of the worst tsunamis in history, thanking INTERPOL staff and Disaster Victim Identification Teams in tears; our latest IRT, leaving Lyon to assist Kenyan police investigators at the request of and under the leadership of our Kenyan police colleagues; and the stamp on the first-ever INTERPOL passport which this week will be recognized in 64 countries? Or the 20-country Working Group under Jürgen Stock reaching agreement in a way forward with regards to INTERPOL's Evolving Funding Model.

Or the election of our first female President, Madame Mireille Ballestrazzi, who has dedicated her entire professional life to policing.

Do you remember when so many thought these achievements not possible?

These are just snapshots of what INTERPOL has been able to achieve with you... following intense debate and skepticism. In the end, they speak of the power of bringing 190 member countries together under the aegis of INTERPOL with a common vision guiding us.

For me, the vision was born out of the combination between my personal experience 20 years ago as a law enforcement official in a single country overseeing 40,000 persons, four agencies and a USD 2.4 billion budget, together with the challenges, opportunities, crises and successes that I have shared with you and colleagues from five different continents and now close to 100 nationalities working at INTERPOL General Secretariat offices worldwide over the last 13 years.

The diversity of INTERPOL's and NCBS' staff is one of our greatest assets. They are dedicated, hard-working and driven by a mission that has brought them and you to travel across the world to support our member countries when and wherever needed. Each of them, and you, has added a stroke of paint to that vision, in order to bring it to life.

This is the vision I saw reflected in the eyes of those I met as Secretary General in 172 member countries. The same vision that I see, as I speak, in your eyes today.

That vision is simple, but incredibly powerful.

That by connecting police to one another, to other public institutions worldwide, to the private sector and to the wider public, another world is possible. A safer world. A world where citizens all of our member countries can have a better life.

This is the pledge we ideally took, whenever a new member country joined the INTERPOL family. That your challenges are now the Organization's challenges; that the threats to your men and women in uniform in the field are now threats faced by INTERPOL; and that irrespective of power, influence, wealth and size, INTERPOL will be there at your side.

If state of the art policing tools are needed, we will deliver them. If they don't exist, we will design and deploy them from scratch.

If vital information is needed in the field, we will drag our network to the frontlines of policing, like we did in 141 member countries. If you are facing unique challenges in accessing our network, we will be there to manage and support your connection, as we are doing today for 120 NCBs.

If there are officers in need of special skills, we will reach them and train them. By the end of this year, they will be 10,000 from all of our 190 member countries, and they will be trained in areas ranging from migrant smuggling and counter-terrorism to crime scene exploitation, intelligence analysis and match-fixing. This, thanks to external donors like the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development of Canada, the European Union, FIFA and as part of our Trafficking in Illicit Goods & Counterfeiting and pharmaceutical crime programmes.

But none of this would have been ever possible without the Executive Committee and this General Assembly's will to support INTERPOL. These successes speak of your courage to make bold choices at key moments in our history.

And that courage is precisely what INTERPOL must show again, this week if we want to keep that vision alive.

Last month's attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya wasn't just a new, tragic chapter in our struggle against terror. It's part of a bigger picture.

It came only days after Al Qaida's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri had called the group, its affiliates and sympathizers worldwide to "bleed out" its enemies, via frequent, small scale "dispersed strikes" to be "carried out by one brother, or a small number of brothers".

Those words were yet another confirmation of the changing landscape INTERPOL faces today. That of smaller, faster and less detectable threats. That of lone wolves replacing complex organizations with basic know-how and greater mobility. That of a myriad of potential "soft targets" in your cities' streets.

A landscape mirrored in cyberspace – where 980 million threats were detected by Kaspersky Lab, our industry partner, in the second quarter of this year alone. Where Internet users have grown in 15 years from less than 200 million to more than 2.7 billion, ready to turn into cyber victims or cyber threats. Where in the developing world smartphones are spreading 10 times faster than fixed Internet connections, and where al Shabaab can tweet its attacks in real time.

This is the world changing around us. A world where demand for INTERPOL tools and support can only be projected to explode.

Yet as demand is soaring, it is an undeniable fact that INTERPOL's resources from mandatory statutory contributions are plunging.

September 11 had forced INTERPOL to turn to its member countries to finance its transformation with a 23 per cent annual increase in statutory contributions. But a decade later, that figure had already fallen to 1 per cent.

Astonishingly, two years before my leaving office, the Organization finds itself in virtually the same situation we were in in 1998, two years before I first became Secretary General.

15 years ago – Africa under attack. The threat of terrorism ever present globally. The financial situation for the Organization just as bleak as it is today.

And this week, just like in 1998, INTERPOL stands at a crossroads. One that will call upon you, our member countries, to choose – clearly, unequivocally, and without hesitation – between two possible worlds.

In the first world, our enemies, the transnational criminals and terrorists, will win.

It's a world where the least developed countries, targeted scientifically by criminals to set up base and recruit, to plot and launch attacks, will be left alone and sent to the back of the line by INTERPOL. Countries like Somalia, the home of Al Shabab, the group proudly taking credit for the Westgate Mall terrorist attack, and where only two days ago a suicide bomber walked into a café in the town of Baladweyne, blowing himself up and taking at least 13 lives.

In this world, Somalia will be prevented from accessing INTERPOL's support. It won't have its voice heard at our General Assembly. It won't even be able to vote for the next Secretary General. This, for not paying dues which could be easily paid on its behalf by any of our richer members. And Somalia won't be alone in this. There will be 17 other countries sharing the same fate, with their citizens de facto left at peril.

In parallel, this world will feature blatant security gaps. Half a billion people will be left free to cross borders unscreened. Having entered foreign territory, some of them will be renting cars and checking into hotels before detonating themselves against tourists; they will be opening bank accounts before boarding planes that will never reach their destinations; they will be renting stores in malls where they will execute innocent citizens.

At the same time, having avoided detection at customs, stolen vehicles, illicit goods and fake medicines will be free to flood markets or become weapons in the hands of criminals and terrorists.

Finally, this is the world where cyberspace will turn into an atomic wasteland, where fraudsters, child abusers and terrorists will be left free to roam and prey on innocents, your economies and their future.

In other words, if we don't act and if we don't show courage, this world could sanction the death of INTERPOL's vision. It will signal us all that we failed, without appeal. That the safer world we were dreaming about will remain as such. A dream.

But, we can be courageous and take measured risks like we have in the past. We can test our ideas with those countries willing to do so and then report back the results to the Executive Committee and General Assembly.

Thereby, turning a dream into our blueprint for the future. Taking control of our destiny. Delivering the safer world we promised to our member countries since the idea of INTERPOL was first born.

In a nutshell, we can choose another world for our future, and start building it.

One where, one day, membership to INTERPOL will not require mandatory statutory contributions, because there will be other, greater external sources for the Organization's financing. Sources that create no conflict of interest and that can be embraced by all member countries.

One where your ability to pay dues will not determine whether your police can be trained by us, whether your physical or cyber borders can be made safer by our tools, and whether your citizens will have to wonder if the next client through the door of that restaurant will detonate himself.

One where the name INTERPOL and its vision will be known across the private, public and non-governmental sectors, and where law abiding citizens and private entities will stand in line to contribute to our cause, because they see it as their own. And because they see and feel the direct benefit of being linked to INTERPOL.

One where a terrorist escaping screening at the border while holding a stolen passport will have to look behind his shoulder every single second. Because the moment he uses that document with a private business, he will be stopped thanks to that shop, company or airline being connected to INTERPOL, and being part of our vision for a safer world.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dear colleagues,

This is a world I know by heart. It's one I have been thinking about and fighting to shape every single day, for the past 13 years as your Secretary General, and even before then.

It was 1998 when I first realized the weakness of INTERPOL's financial model, while working as a financial adviser to the Organization. That same year, I witnessed our Executive Committee and our General Assembly show us the path towards a new INTERPOL, taking with an overwhelming majority the decision to authorize the EC "to empower the Secretary General to conclude an agreement (...) between the Organization and the foundation(s) established to support INTERPOL's actions".

And it was five years before then, or a whole 20 years from today, that I first started thinking about how we should fill the security gaps the world was suffering from. It was the moment one of the wealthiest and most powerful nations in the world failed to stop a single man, posing as a refugee with a stolen Iraqi passport, from gaining access to US territory and execute the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.

Yes, the image of Ramsi Yousef's terrorist attack in my home city of New York has been with me for the past 20 years, just as it is right now, while I speak to all of you.

Because two decades since that incident, almost a dozen years since the creation of SLTD, our borders are still not secure. The next Ramzi Yousef may be approaching a border post somewhere in the world right now, and he knows that the odds are in his favour.

But this doesn't have to be our future. INTERPOL can choose. You can choose.

In my view, this General Assembly session marks a moment that will remain in our history forever. Either as our finest hour; or as potentially the biggest missed opportunity in our history.

Because this gathering will determine which world INTERPOL wants to live in, as it steps into its second century, and as it transitions towards a new leadership.

As I mentioned, two days ago our Executive Committee chose to bring into life the decision taken by the General Assembly in 1998, approving the creation of the first ever INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World .

The next step is for you, our member countries, to endorse this historical move, and approve the guidelines that will govern our new funding model, and which will show us the way towards a new INTERPOL. Free from the shackles of fiscal crises in our member countries, but still loyal to its values, its neutrality, transparency, independence and integrity.

In parallel, you will be presented with the finest examples of what INTERPOL does best: innovation. You will be shown how we have been partnering with the private sector to design the next generation of INTERPOL screening tools.

You will hear about the INVEX project, where four German car manufacturers and NCB Weisbaden have joined INTERPOL in identifying stolen vehicles on the market, leading to more than 1,800 hits and hundreds of seizures, and how we want to expand that model.

You will also hear about the I-Checkit project, which last Saturday received the Executive Committee's endorsement to enter its pilot phase.

The concept stems from our decades of experience in supporting member countries' police in tracking criminals, victims or dangerous items worldwide. From our tools, so effective because they speak a simple and immediate language:

- If you recognize a face from a red notice, please notify police;
- If you find a missing child from a yellow notice, please notify your law enforcement authorities;
- If this masterpiece enters the doors of your auction house, museum or gallery, please contact your nearest police station;
- If you are a car manufacturer participating in our INVEX project, and you identify a stolen vehicle through your limited access to our SMV database records, please inform the police.

I-Checkit applies the same principle to SLTD and to businesses already required by law to check customers' identity. We won't send them any data or nominal information, but allow them to send us numbers of identity documents they are already checking as part of their duties.

If a hit is produced, the concerned NCB will know and act accordingly. The NCB where the private sector entity is located will decide whether a yellow warning light is sent or whether nothing is sent, and whether the NCB contacts the private sector entity directly. Under no circumstances will the private sector entity have access to nominal or police data via INTERPOL.

Yet the resulting potential is enormous. By involving a few major carriers or hotel chains, we can run tests in our pilot project and increase by tens of millions the number of passports screened through INTERPOL. We could revolutionize security not just at borders, but even before potential threats reach them. In other words, we could create yet another innovation destined to change policing forever.

But as always, none of these ground-breaking initiatives will succeed without your support and without your challenging questions and even scepticism.

This is why INTERPOL is asking you to join us at the drawing table. It is time to design the blueprint on which the next Secretary General will rely, to lead INTERPOL into its tomorrow.

And at this historical moment, no better venue for this gathering could exist, than Cartagena.

Today, we are hosted by a member country that made its NCB and international police cooperation two pillars of its vision for a better tomorrow. A country whose ordinary people, security forces and leaders have fought organized crime and terrorism with decades of astonishing determination and sacrifice, in order to move towards peace, inch by inch.

Minister Pinzón Bueno,

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

May the motto on Colombia's coat-of-arms remind us why we gather here on this day, just like we were brought together almost a century ago across continents, cultures and languages.

"Libertad y Orden" – "Freedom and order".

Because when crime reigns in the streets – we can't be free.
When terror ravages our hearts and minds – we can't be free.

Because for every citizen free to choose a better future, there is someone wearing a uniform in the streets. Someone ready to act, when that future will be in danger.

This is the mission we chose. As individuals. As an organization. This is who we are. This is what we are called upon to choose and defend today.

One future – the first dawn of a new INTERPOL century.
One vision – the one we have built and nurtured together.

A safer world... a better life.

Gracias. Thank you. Merci. Shukran