



**GLASGOW 2024
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Secretary General's Address

by

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Members of INTERPOL's Executive Committee

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Good afternoon, Bonjour, Buenos dias, As-Salaam-Alaikum.

Nearly 20 years ago, I attended my first INTERPOL General Assembly in my home capital of Berlin. There, I had the honour to stand for election for the position of Executive Committee Delegate for Europe.

That year, my home agency the BKA, had been part of an operation spanning three continents to apprehend a notorious online predator.

It was my first exposure to INTERPOL's work, and the vital results it helps achieve every single day.

And then, nine years later in Monaco, I came to you with a plan for reform and growth of this famous institution – a strategy to turn *vision* into *impact*.

It was based on delivering our core business, on enhancing partnerships, and on pursuing innovation, all built on the foundation of sound governance.

Today, in Glasgow, amid the generous hospitality of the United Kingdom, I stand before you, confident that our joint efforts over the last ten years have made INTERPOL stronger than ever.

Ladies and gentlemen,

INTERPOL was created to serve police by allowing the exchange of information across borders. This mission still drives our work today.

We have made INTERPOL's systems more connected, our products better, and our response more coordinated than ever before.

Since 2014, more than 40 new member countries have expanded their connectivity to I-24/7 across their territory.

Countless more connections have been made at new border crossings and to partner law enforcement agencies.

We have added five new databases, and expanded the reach of many more, with more than 70 countries now connected to the ICSE Database, helping to identify the victims of the most heinous of crimes.

We have achieved unparalleled success in coordinating operations across all domains, and we have given new emphasis to emerging criminal threats, including in cyber enabled fraud, and the growing penetration of synthetic drugs across all regions.

No better example of this success is the establishment of INTERPOL's Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre.

IFCACC has played a leading role in dismantling complex frauds, and has helped recover hundreds of millions of dollars from criminal hands through the I-GRIP stop payment initiative.

In addition, the Silver Notice pilot, commencing in January 2025, will be the start of a greater role for INTERPOL in assisting asset forfeiture globally.

These advancements show that our capabilities continue to mature, but they are also reinforcing the need to give the global police community the skills needed to confront this new age.

Our capacity building and training activities span the globe, and span the full remit of policing needs.

We enhance expertise in threat detection, investigative skills, forensic analysis and in how to respond to emerging criminal methods like the use of cryptocurrencies, uncrewed technology and the dark web.

We partner with your governments to help build and mentor specialist units – in child sexual exploitation investigations, criminal analysis, cyber-enabled fraud and more.

In 2016, 3,000 officers received training from INTERPOL. In 2023, that number had grown to 17,000.

The continued growth of the INTERPOL Global Academy – which will welcome two new members by the end of this session here in Glasgow – allows us to combine advanced police training from around the world, and to make it available through a single platform. With the INTERPOL Virtual Academy, we have adapted to the new information age.

However, I still believe in the convening power of INTERPOL, and in the lessons that can only be learned when fellow police officers come together – face to face.

That is why I am announcing the launch of the INTERPOL Law Enforcement Academy, with a brick-and-mortar home in the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore.

This state-of-the-art educational institution will offer a comprehensive range of professional developments and events.

The first, and flagship offering of this academy will be an Executive Leadership Programme, focused at the Senior and Executive levels of policing.

Your NCBs will be soon invited to nominate candidates for the first cohort to benefit from this programme, making INTERPOL an integral part of their development.

This important development in Singapore is the first step of a broader strategy for our physical presence across the globe, which we intend to bring to the General Assembly next year.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues

Equipping the next generation of police leaders with the right skills will be a pressing need, as they will face a world that continues to evolve.

Over the past ten years, the policing structures we all work in have become more complex.

Security efforts extend beyond national police to specialised agencies, dedicated units, and now include integrated approaches on the whole-of-Government basis.

This has also meant a new role for our NCBs as the focal point for their countries' engagement with INTERPOL, and as an enabler for a broader relationship across more ministries.

I am proud of the efforts we have made to keep INTERPOL relevant, and to expand its central role in the global security architecture.

We have brought the voice of criminal police to the United Nations Security Council, calling for global action to combat terrorism and organized crime.

We saw the UN General Assembly unanimously adopt the first ever resolution on cooperation with INTERPOL in 2016, currently undergoing its fourth review, to be concluded this year.

By endorsing this resolution, the international community affirmed the status of law enforcement – and INTERPOL – as key actors in global security and in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. That role, in turn, has made INTERPOL a recognized partner in high-level fora, such as the G7, G20, the Global Coalition Against Da'esh.

The same applies to decision makers in every region – including within the African Union Peace and Security Commission, the Arab Interior Ministers Council, CARICOM, the Council of the European Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council, Mercosur, the Organization of American States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Our partnerships with the World Economic Forum and the Munich Security Conference also allowed us to enter strategic discussions on the security and innovation landscape.

The result – bringing criminal policing closer to the highest international agendas.

Because the future we face demands a voice for us.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While expanding our services and reach, we have lifted our sights to see future trends for law enforcement – the threats, and of course, the opportunities.

We were first in the metaverse, and we are at the forefront of discussions about the impact of artificial intelligence and the challenge of its responsible use by your police agencies.

INTERPOL has been an early adopter of the power of this technology, putting it to use within the General Secretariat, in its tools, and its corporate backbone.

We have adopted machine learning to identify anomalies in our data systems, in real time – to ensure their continuity for your operations.

We have also given police around the world new solutions to speed up response, including the first global automated platform for secure translation of police messages.

AI and Machine Learning will also enhance the next generation of our ICSE Database to take the fight against child abuse to a next level.

Powered by our flagship I-CORE programme, we have enhanced the power of our criminal analysis through the INSIGHT platform.

We have strengthened biometric assistance through the biometric hub, and through the launch of NEXUS, we will soon bring structured messaging into how your officers communicate through INTERPOL.

Yet some crucial assets cannot be designed or built by us alone.

No matter the resources, no matter the plans, no matter the big ideas, INTERPOL will not be successful without one key ingredient:

And that is trust.

Restoring, and building, trust in INTERPOL has been a cornerstone of my mandate. Based on our constitutional commitments to independence, neutrality, and human rights.

I have built trust in those who fund and support us through a commitment to financial rigor.

The house was brought back in order and remains in order – with a historic increase in support by all of our member countries, and with virtually no recourse to private sector funding.

We have made accountability and transparency key tenets of our collective action.

And we have given a greater focus to ethics, including through new Codes of Conduct for INTERPOL staff and Executive Committee members, and the creation of the Standing Committee on Ethical Matters.

Going forward, our I-Corporate initiative will ensure that the vital systems that keep INTERPOL operational will be strengthened today, and into the future.

Finally, and critically, it has been necessary to build, and maintain, trust in our criminal data processing. The introduction of the Notices and the Diffusions Task Force – the NDTF - has been a watershed moment for INTERPOL to balance seamless police cooperation with an irrefutable commitment to being a responsible global actor.

I am proud of my role in the establishment of the NDTF, and I am proud of your commitment, your commitment, to support it since then, and to this day.

Equally, the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files plays a critical role in ensuring the integrity of our systems and protecting individual rights in our data processing.

It also provides protection to *us*.

Its independence allows it to be recognised as an effective legal remedy.

With these bodies in place, we can confidently report to the world that we are a rule of law organization. With that, we can keep the world's trust. And we can continue to deliver.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's successes mean little if we are not on a path to build on them.

That was why INTERPOL's Vision 2030 Initiative was so critical. In a world facing increased fragmentation, and an ongoing trust deficit, INTERPOL will need to play a critical role.

We can facilitate a unique form of data diplomacy to encourage information sharing, and as an honest broker we can deliver a global platform to combat global threats.

Vision 2030 identified seven action streams of work to advance, and led to the creation and first meeting of the INTERPOL Future Council last September. In doing so, it gave us a clear way forward. And that work is vital, because as time moves on, the path we are taking as a world is challenging – perhaps even dark.

But as I have often said, crisis for the international community is an opportunity for organised crime. And it is an opportunity they are taking with both hands.

Despite all our best efforts, and the significant results we have achieved, we face an adversary with relentless ambition.

An adversary able to turn to new tools like AI to supercharge their frauds and cyber enabled crimes.

An adversary selling new products like synthetic drugs to find new markets and exploit new victims.

We are in the fight of our lives. For our communities, and for our global security.

Nothing else matters.

The traditional domestic approach to law enforcement has fallen away with globalization. Bilateral solutions face increasing limitations.

I know I paint a bit of a grim picture – but the night is always darkest before the dawn.

I am confident in the ability of police to succeed, but if we are to prevail, we must learn our lessons.

Today, I want to offer three of them, as we look ahead.

First – I still strongly believe we have not fulfilled the potential of our existing capabilities.

INTERPOL must continue to reach out to you – and the Ministries you report to – about the solutions we have available. The more we offer, the more we can deliver.

I do not believe in league tables – but INTERPOL remains under-utilised compared to its huge potential. The huge potential of our organization.

Many among you have experienced that impact, when your governments decided to rely on INTERPOL to respond to urgent domestic priorities. In some cases, for the first time.

Those threats may have taken many forms.

- A stolen motor vehicle epidemic – where our SMV database was put in action;
- A cocaine flow or a tsunami of cyber fraud – where our operational support teams assisted investigators on the ground;
- A single mafia group emerging as a global broker – and against whom we built a coalition of 20 countries – 20 countries so far;
- A global foreign terrorist fighter crisis – where we turned our channels into a global early warning system that our organization provides.

This is where INTERPOL is true to its core – taking global capabilities and focusing them to impact a single, urgent national priority.

You have witnessed this in your jurisdictions. Therefore, you now have the power to share that knowledge with fellow law enforcement leaders.

These are conversations that *must be had*.

Ladies and gentlemen,

in ten years, I have had more meetings than I can remember, and probably more than I would want to count.

In too many of them, I heard the words “*I am not aware. Not aware that INTERPOL could do that. Not aware how INTERPOL protects the sensitive data we share*”.

They were Ministers, local police and even Chiefs of police.

So if we are to succeed, then the biggest advocates for INTERPOL must be those who use our tools and services. Every single day in our 196 member countries.

So I challenge all of you here today: talk about what we have to offer. We as a collective law enforcement group. Talk about the results we are able to achieve.

Talk about the challenges you faced in incorporating our systems into your domestic laws, and how you have overcome them.

And talk to us – about how the General Secretariat can tackle your next challenge – with the solutions we have ready, and we have ready right now.

The **second** key lesson is that we need to avoid duplication and fragmentation of efforts, at what is a decisive moment in history. And you have heard from Prime Minister Starmer about this, this morning. This is not about turf wars. The one thing that unites us as police officers – no matter where we serve – is that criminals invariably have more resources than us.

We must work together – not to build again what is already there – but to make use of every resource we have to the fullest.

Police cooperation needs strong platforms. But multiplying those structures, to claim exclusive ownership, only creates new silos to be overcome.

Every dollar, every euro, every pound used to duplicate, is a waste.

It is a waste that can create gaps in our security architecture – cracks through which vital information can be lost.

And it is a waste that can, in the worst cases, cost lives – lives of innocent civilians. Lives of police officers.

These are gaps that we can avoid. And we must avoid these gaps.

Let me tell you today – we do not need silos. We need bridges.

Third, good governance is the foundation for our operational over-achievements as law enforcement, and as a global, international organization.

Any change to our governing model, no matter how well intentioned, or how simple it appears, needs careful consideration as a membership.

It takes years to build a positive reputation and confidence. The legacy of trust we have built must be protected at all costs, each and every time we consider potential changes to our legal framework; our governance structures; and the principles that guide us.

That is why I am so grateful for the ongoing efforts of Former President Khoo as Chair of the Working Group on Governance.

With the authority provided by you – our INTERPOL General Assembly – our supreme decision-making body – they continue to be tasked, and to deliver, high quality work.

Through consensus, they have helped study and shape proposals that pass the high thresholds of agreement set by our Constitution.

But despite this, there is one change to our approach that needs no further study. Because it must be categorically rejected.

And that is letting politics encroach into our core activities.

In Vienna last year, marking our centenary, I reflected on the importance of our neutrality, and how it has seen us able to operate – and to grow – despite a more polarized and fragmented world.

Policing is now part of an integrated approach to security. It is increasingly part of foreign policy objectives.

When these are embraced in the spirit of cooperation and multilateralism, great things can be achieved.

But when policing becomes a tool within conflicts, distrust and geopolitical competition, we will be undermining our own efforts.

This uncertainty risks challenging our neutrality; the building block of our success. The building block of our collective success.

That is how we will lose our unique form of diplomacy – police diplomacy – which allows us to work across barriers otherwise seen as impenetrable.

That is the power of INTERPOL we need to preserve and we need to preserve, At all costs.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

One final thing to remember about all journeys is that they rarely go according to plan.

In Chile, I came to you with a clear strategy for a second mandate as Secretary General.

I returned to Lyon energized, and enthusiastic to start putting it into action in 2020.

And... we all know what happened next.

The COVID pandemic forced us to react quickly – to embrace new technology to deliver our mandate, while still keeping staff, and your officers, safe.

But the real impact was on your police forces, and the people that lead them, all over the world.

Thrust to the forefront of a global crisis, with limited equipment, and at high risk to their health and safety, the world's police played a critical role in keeping the community safe.

And they did it, while prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Too often I have offered my condolences to those present here at the tragic loss of police lives in the line of duty.

The courage, and the determination to step forward in the face of danger and injustice, no matter the cost, is something that bonds all of us.

It is who we are.

We are police.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Nearly twenty years ago, in Berlin, I sought your support to join the Executive Committee of this proud institution.

In my speech, I remarked it was necessary to confront the network of crime with an even tighter network of information shared by all members of INTERPOL.

Ten years ago, with greater knowledge about INTERPOL, and an even greater drive to see it succeed, I asked for your trust to be elected Secretary General.

To lead an organization based on principle, that would deliver for the world's police, in a changing world.

Today, I invite those that come after me to embrace the challenge, and the opportunity, of being the stewards of our mission into the future.

That task begins at this General Assembly with the selection of my successor, and I congratulate Mr Valdecy Urquiza on his nomination for this important role.

Guiding INTERPOL through the future will be a challenging task, but it will not be a task to be faced alone.

By birth and by design, INTERPOL is a global collective effort.

It takes all of us.

In that spirit, I would like to thank all of you – those with whom I have met, Ministers and Chiefs of Police, Heads of NCBs, who have hosted me in your home countries, fellow police officers at the frontlines sharing stories and ideas on how to become better police, and a better INTERPOL.

To our NCBs - specifically I thank you for everything you do, every day, to connect police all over the world.

I would like to thank the President and the INTERPOL Executive Committee – and those with whom I have served in the past – for their guidance, professionalism, and dedication.

Finally, through those present here today, to all who have worked at the General Secretariat.

I have had the pleasure to learn from your perspectives, your experiences, and your dedication.

You come from 134 member countries from different parts of the world across all regions, giving us a uniquely diverse workforce.

We have taken this commitment to diversity further, through the Young Global Police Leaders Programme; and by placing the impact of women in policing under the global spotlight.

I am proud of how we have brought together so many ideas, so many cultures, and of what we have seen them achieve.

An INTERPOL General Assembly is a snapshot of the team effort that goes on at the General Secretariat every day.

The subject matter experts – contracted and seconded.

The protocol officials engaging with local authorities to help us deliver such a successful event.

The technicians who helped prepare the venue, keep us connected, and have all the official documentation ready for you our delegates from all over the world.

Those who give me guidance and advice to navigate the many challenges we face, and craft the message we send to the world in response.

Those entrusted to keep IPSG staff, including myself safe.

The translators helping me send this message today.

All guided with the help of my Cabinet, and my senior management team.

All of you from the General Secretariat here in this conference hall today: please stand to be recognized.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues, friends,

Together, we have done great things. But much more ahead needs to be done.

The fight against crime can only succeed if it is grounded in trust and grounded in solidarity.

A strong INTERPOL is where that fight starts. And this fight is not easy.

But INTERPOL is an organization of hope and opportunity for a safer world. A purpose that transcends us all, including those who have led it.

Speaking for myself, this was the greatest honour of my professional life.

And so, for one last time,

Thank you. Merci. Gracias. Shukran.