



# **Remarks: Opening Ceremony**

by

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**Kigali, Rwanda**

Your Excellency, President Kagame,

Honorable Minister, Harerimana,

Madame La Présidente,

Inspector General Gasana,

Your Excellencies,

Members of the INTERPOL Executive Committee,

Chiefs of Police, Heads of Delegations and Heads of National Central Bureaus,

Distinguished Representatives from International Organizations, Partners and Observer Agencies,

Dear INTERPOL Colleagues;

Dear Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. Bonjour. Buenos Dias. Assalam Aleikum.

In drawing inspiration from Rwanda's powerful journey of growth and progress, INTERPOL is honoured that the 84th session of its General Assembly, here today, in Kigali, in the presence of such distinguished delegates as you, begins.

Your Excellency, President Kagame, this meeting, which is hosted with such elegance by Rwanda, is structured with a truly global perspective on policing in the 21st century. It is being attended by close to 700 delegates from about 145 countries and international organizations.

Just as the world's successful nations continually adapt to changing global complexities, police forces need to be extremely innovative to counter threats posed by transnational crime.

Such innovation is truly reflected in Rwanda's growth policies, which are backed by good governance and inclusiveness, always focusing on people.

It is a part of Rwandan culture "to lend a helping hand" to others, which I have witnessed first hand. The people here seem constantly busy and always involved in contributing towards some purpose.

Similarly, INTERPOL also focuses on lending a helping hand to – or serving – the law enforcement agencies of its member countries, while constantly involving them in its decision making and governance.

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During the past 12 months, my first year in office, global political agendas have been dominated by security issues: conflict situations have worsened; criminal threats have become no less – they have only become more multifaceted.

With the increasing interconnectedness of the digital age, where crime continues to establish itself as a global phenomenon, the need for a *multilateral* response has become vital.

Which is why it is equally vital to have the involvement of INTERPOL's member countries through their political leadership, ministerial structures, and law enforcement agencies in forging multilateral cooperation.

Your Excellency President Kagame's and Minister Harerimana's presence today indicates how importantly they view such cooperation.

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INTERPOL's core work remains this: connecting police; facilitating information sharing; training and capacity building; and providing analytical and operational support. For this, it relies on the strong support of the National Central Bureaus.

Meanwhile, expectations from the Organization's policing capabilities are steadily growing.

This raises some critical questions. What should the priorities of the Organization be, and how should these be financed in a world where international police cooperation is increasingly looked upon to provide global solutions, but is to a certain extent under-resourced?

This is why – just as Rwanda conducted a consultative process for three years before defining "VISION 2020" in the year 2000 under President Kagame's leadership – at the start of this year, I initiated an organization-wide change process called INTERPOL 2020.

At the core of INTERPOL 2020 is the multilateral dialogue with 190 member countries, to better understand their challenges to better meet them. INTERPOL provides the neutral platform for such a dialogue to take place between its member countries, based on mutual trust.

INTERPOL 2020 also includes the learning of innovative practices in policing, such as those deployed by the Rwandan National Police in its initiatives such as e-policing or the "Isange One Stop" model.

In fact, Rwanda's efforts to fight gender-based crimes while strongly promoting gender equality in its government's programmes, or focusing on the capacity building of its police forces to combat modern day crimes, reflect forward thinking. INTERPOL's Executive Committee has benefited from this experience and learned from such thinking during IGP Gasana's tenure as its delegate for Africa.

In fact, all across INTERPOL's membership, there is much to be learnt from the experience of law enforcement agencies in different parts of the world, from confronting terrorism to policing mega cities.

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In closing, I am convinced that international police cooperation must cultivate innovation into its strategic development. In a dynamic world with constant change brought about by complex threats such as those of cybercrime, policing as a profession will undergo fundamental transformation in the next decade or so.

There is a clear role for INTERPOL to expand and see how it can engage with and learn from other communities. This also includes the private sector – learning how entities deal with changing realities and adapt their models to stay relevant.

President Kagame, Minister Harerimana, IGP Gasana,

On behalf of INTERPOL's membership, allow me to extend our heartfelt gratitude for welcoming us all to Rwanda. Personally, the warmth comes as no surprise – this is my third visit, and I have been touched by Rwanda's hospitality each time.

Murakoze!

Thank you for your attention.

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