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REMARKS

by

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All-Russia Seminar for Heads of INTERPOL NCBs

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Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation

Deputy Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Ural District, Mr. Sergey SMETANYUK,

Governor of Sverdlovsk Region, Mr. Alexander MISHARIN

Chief of Criminal Police for Sverdlovsk region, Police Major General Vladimir FILIPOV

Heads of NCB Moscow, Police Major General Timur LAKHONIN,

Distinguished Heads of NCBs,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

DÓBROE ÚTRO.

It is a true pleasure to be here today, representing INTERPOL's General Secretariat at this All-Russia Heads of NCBs Seminar.

While this is my seventh visit to the Russian Federation as the Secretary General of INTERPOL, each and every time I am amazed by the warm welcome of our Russian colleagues, and the beauty of this land.

Yekaterinburg is no exception to the rule. Today, we have gathered in a truly unique city that has played a key role as a strategic business, industrial and research center throughout its history – dating back to 1723 – and that of Russia.

Today - looking at its architecture, its monuments and its people - it is incredible to believe the city remained closed to foreigners for several decades because of its strategic role, until 1990.

And it was in that same year, two decades ago this very day, that just like Yekaterinburg opened its beauty to foreign eyes, the Soviet Union allowed the world to access the talent and dedication of its police forces.

On 27 September 1990, at its 59th General Assembly session in Ottawa, Canada, not only did INTERPOL welcome a key global player within its ranks, but a clear message was also sent to leaders, police and citizens around the world:

First - that new, more complex threats to international security were emerging in a rapidly changing world. Threats that called for a unified, global approach to policing.
Second - that the commitment of police around the world to the protection of their citizens went well beyond politics.

As we all know, it is a commitment that makes those who dedicate their lives to law enforcement part of the same family.

The INTERPOL family.

Or, in the beautiful words of Prime Minister Vladimir PUTIN at the 2008 General Assembly in St. Petersburg, the INTERPOL 'brotherhood'.

And it is you, Heads of INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, who form the backbone of this family.

Today, you are sitting next to many of your brothers, coming from all over the Eurasian region, while many others are leading their staff to counter cross-border crime through INTERPOL channels with the dedication we all know.

The same dedication shown by those who played this role in the past, such as former Heads of NCB Moscow Mr Ivan SARDAK and Mr Vladimir OVCHINSKY, whose legacy has been proudly and effectively taken forward by Major General Timur LAKHONIN.

Thanks to the work of all of you here today, INTERPOL is able to connect together police forces from different continents, and at the same time to achieve results in the field, close to where crime strikes every day.

That is why empowering our NCBs is the best recipe for INTERPOL's success. That has been the main focus of our work so far, and it will continue to be so, in years to come.

A clear example is the EU-TACIS program, which has seen INTERPOL leverage its alliance with other international organizations to upgrade and extend its secure I-24/7 communication network across Russia and the Ukraine.

Thanks to the generosity of the European Union, and the outstanding work of our Assistant Director for I-24/7 Support Center, Mr Alexander GRIDCHIN, in less than four years INTERPOL planned and implemented two ambitious capacity-building initiatives.

The objective was to further enhance international police communication and data sharing between the Russian Federation, the Ukraine and the rest of the INTERPOL membership.

Here in Russia, we specifically aimed at extending access to our network and to our databases closer to the frontlines, to reach 39 regional branches and other key players such as the Office of the General Prosecutor and the Federal Security Service in Moscow.

In both countries, and also by recognition of our donors, the programs were a success.

Just take this into consideration:

Comparing the three years (2003-2005) that preceded the start of the implementation of the program in Russia, and the past year and a half (2009-2010):

Overall searches by Russia in our nominal databases grew by more than 280 times, with more than a two-fold increase in hits;

We had six times as many searches in our stolen motor vehicles database, with twice as many hits;

Our stolen/lost travel document database saw 600 times as many searches, and 480 times as many hits.

In the Ukraine, we saw similar trends: almost twice as many nominal searches, more than ten times as many searches for stolen vehicles, and 22 times as many checks on travel documents.

Yet as police professional, we must ask ourselves: ‘what is the meaning of these numbers on the ground, in the streets, where we will be judged by our leaders and our co-citizens?’

Let me answer with two simple examples, coming from the region that has welcomed us today: the Sverdlovsk Region.

The first case dates back to 2008, and to only a few months after the local NCB branch had gained access to I-24/7.

It was then, that checks against INTERPOL databases allowed to determine that a foreign individual applying for temporary residence in the region was in fact wanted by the Czech Republic on rape and extortion charges.

The result? A fugitive identified, located and extradited, a criminal not allowed to reside in Russia.

The second case occurred in 2009. Once again, thanks to access to I-24/7, INTERPOL databases revealed that an individual had been living on Russian territory using a false name.

That same individual was wanted by Latvia as a member of a group that used to rob motorists, often impersonating police on national highways. His arrest and extradition were the next, natural consequences.

Take these results, and multiply them by the number of checks that every year are conducted via our network, and by the number of posts now able to access it across the Commonwealth of Independent States. The potential is enormous. And thanks to initiatives being implemented as we speak, it is only set to grow.

Based on the success of the TACIS program, Russian authorities have decided to further extend access to the I-24/7 network, to reach additional police units at the front lines (such as road police) and other law enforcement agencies (such as immigration officials at border posts). As a result, the Russian Federation and its borders will be more secure.

That is why we are working closely with our international partners to achieve similar results elsewhere in Asia. As we speak, the EU-INTERPOL in Central Asia initiative (ICA) is being implemented, which will aim at building international police capacity in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Once again, thanks to the financial support of the European Union, we will provide infrastructure and training to further empower our NCBs in the region.

All these new initiatives will serve both the countries involved, and also the rest of the INTERPOL membership, who will be able to share with them more rapidly and more securely police information.

And rest assured, these capabilities will be indispensable as INTERPOL and its member countries seek new victories against our common enemies.

In particular, our struggle against terrorism comes to mind. The March 2010 suicide attacks on the Moscow underground and the August 2010 car bomb attack in Vladikavkaz are only the latest reminders of the importance of our efforts.

That is why we must keep the momentum we have achieved through initiatives such as project KALKAN and the Fusion Task Force framework.

When KALKAN was launched, in the aftermath of the 2004 wave of terrorist attacks in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, INTERPOL had only 25 terrorist profiles from the region that could be shared with the rest of the membership, together with information on only four terrorist organizations.

Only six years later, and also thanks to the countries represented here today by their Heads of NCBs, more than 2,300 terrorists profiles are available to participating agencies, together with information concerning over 60 organizations from the region.

And over the same period, more than 380 arrests - most of which outside of Asia - have been conducted thanks to the information shared. Such is the power of a global platform, and of the trust built over time, within an international network of experts from the field.

No stronger call exists today, to keep this momentum going.

It is a call to INTERPOL and also to its partners, such as the Anti-Terrorism Center of the Commonwealth of Independent States (ATC-CIS), with whom we signed an agreement in December 2008, and can now access our I-24/7 network.

And it is this same proactive approach that will allow us to strike new victories against an equally dangerous enemy: organized crime.

At times of deep financial crisis around the world, crime syndicates are a threat not only to the security of citizens, but also to the stability of entire financial and political systems.

That is why it is essential that we continue to work, through INTERPOL, to bring together investigators from countries affected by transnational organized crime, their experience and their unique knowledge. The more information shared through INTERPOL, the better we will understand the anatomy of these groups, their weaknesses, and the best way to dismantle them.

This conviction is not based on theory. It comes from the concrete results INTERPOL NCBs have achieved in this field. Among others I am referring to project MILLENIUM, specifically created to target transnational organized crime in the Eurasian region.

Under this initiative, INTERPOL has provided a platform for 43 countries, spread across four continents, to work together and exchange intelligence on powerful crime syndicates in the region, in order to identify their membership, chain of command and *modi operandi*.

Among them is the URALMASH group, very active especially in the Sverdlovsk region but with ramifications reaching the Persian Gulf and Western Europe. Since 2008, 18 countries have been exchanging intelligence in dedicated operational meetings at IPSG in Lyon, specifically targeting this group.

It was the active role of our NCBs and the coordination provided by INTERPOL which eventually allowed to identify, locate and apprehend several key active members of the group across the UAE, the UK and Bulgaria.

In addition, new information is being exchanged regularly, which has allowed the investigation led by Major General Vladimir FILIPOV to identify new URALMASH members and their financial assets here in Russia.

The lesson to be learned is clear: the INTERPOL model works. Yet as we look into the future, we must aim at becoming even better at what we do best.

That is why at the next General Assembly in Doha, Qatar, INTERPOL will be presenting a proposal to establish a Global Complex in Singapore, to complement our General Secretariat in Lyon and fundamentally improve our strategic and operational capabilities.

This is a major step, which will require your full support, in order for all of our member countries to enjoy its enormous benefits.

In Singapore, INTERPOL will focus on innovation and research, in order both to identify new emerging crimes exploiting technology, such as cyber-crime, and cutting-edge tools for police to counter them.

In addition, the INTERPOL Global Complex will provide a second, additional platform located in Asia for round-the-clock response to members' requests, and the deployment of INTERPOL staff to support investigations in the field. As a result, our global operational reach will be greatly enhanced.

And to further extend this reach, we want to make sure that when our Heads of NCBs, their Chiefs of Police and our specialized INTERPOL staff need to travel to meet, exchange information and co-ordinate action, they can do so as rapidly as possible.

For no reasons, they should find more obstacles in crossing borders than the criminals we seek to stop.

That is why we created the INTERPOL Travel Document, and called for our member countries to recognize a special visa status to its holders, fully within the limits of their national legislations.

As Heads of NCBs, I am sure you understand well the importance of this initiative, and I am confident you will assist us in adding more countries to those that have already endorsed it.

In closing, let me - as INTERPOL's Secretary General, as a fellow law enforcement professional, but also as a citizen of the world - thank all of you for your work and that of the officers you lead every day.

And let me do so – to the best of my abilities – in the beautiful language of our hosts:

BALSHÒI SPASÍBO

Thank you very much.