



Speech by President Meng Hongwei, President of INTERPOL

at the 86th INTERPOL General Assembly
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TO RIDE THE TIDE OF THE TIMES AND KEEP THE HOPES OF A CENTURY
an INTERPOL that faces the future

His Excellency Mr. Guo Shengkun, State Councilor and Minister of Public Security of China,
His Excellency Mr. Jan Jambon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of Belgium,
His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs of Malaysia,
His Excellency Mr. Nebojša Stefanović, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs of Serbia,
Honourable Ministers of the Interior, Security and Justice,
Mr. Jürgen Stock, Secretary-General of INTERPOL,
Vice Presidents and Members of the INTERPOL Executive Committee,
Honorable chiefs of police,
Heads and representatives of INTERPOL National Central Bureaus,
Respected partners and observers,
Delegates from INTERPOL member countries,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Zaoshang Hao. Good morning. Bonjour. Buenos días. Assalam alaikum.

Thank you and welcome again. It is an honour for me to be able to speak to you on such a unique day and announce the opening of the 86th INTERPOL General Assembly. We had the pleasure of hearing a far-reaching speech from President Xi, a demonstration of his strategic foresight and leadership. His recognition of the vital role of INTERPOL and announcement of generous support on behalf of the Chinese government are an inspiration for us. I am sure that the counsel and contribution from China will give a significant boost to this meeting, the future of INTERPOL and the security landscape worldwide.

In the past year I have had the opportunity to visit many of our member countries, to meet with their leaders personally as well as with our partners. I have fully immersed myself in the mechanics, challenges and daily operations of INTERPOL.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Jürgen Stock for his full support. I thank everyone at the INTERPOL General Secretariat for their contribution and the members of the EC for your valuable input. Thanks to you, INTERPOL benefits from the expertise and guidance from all regions.

Dear colleagues, we have a lot to do this week. We are going to review a document outlining our stance on global security, give a push to the INTERPOL 2020 initiative, and examine proposals on membership and its criteria. Progress and challenges intertwining.

The General Assembly is the supreme governing body of the Organization. Its success is vital to our development. Hence I would like to share with you my views on the future of the Organization. Our Chinese ancestors once said, “those who can’t plan for ten thousand generations can’t plan for the present.” We need to stand higher and look farther so as to grasp the future and destiny of the Organization.

The world is undergoing profound changes that have never been seen since WWII. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Thanks to the global governance system established after the devastating wars, peace and development has dominated the world for more than 70 years. But problems and conflicts are growing: Political “black swans” swooped in; anti-globalist sentiments are on the rise; refugees perplex Europe; terrorism haunts the globe. As a Chinese poet wrote, the wind that blows into the room heralds a storm closing in from the mountains; these are the signs of the underlying tension.

In the meantime, a round of scientific and industrial revolution is looming; drones are being used in many areas; AI has beaten human “weiqi” masters; facial recognition can reveal not only your identity, but capacity, emotion and thoughts alike. In 15 years most of the cars racing down the streets might not need a driver; in 20 years quantum computing may decipher all the passwords we know in a blink of an eye. These will change the lives we know, the world we know, and the crimes we know. Never before have we been so challenged.

The first wave has already come. From 2000 to 2016, more than 70,000 terrorist attacks occurred, to which a solution still eludes us. 170 million cybercrimes take place every year, causing an estimated loss of 445 billion USD, and yet only one case out of a thousand was cracked. And still, all these are just the thin end of the wedge.

Dear colleagues,

A new wave is coming and we must sail with it. Countries, international organizations and the private sector all face the test. To change with the times and secure a vantage point in the new architecture, or not to change and fall behind, ultimately losing out; that is the question.

I thank our predecessors for their legacy. We are, at the moment, the largest intergovernmental police organization in terms of membership; we are still at the centre of global policing, our leadership and unique role still not replaceable. The principles of cooperation, win-win, neutrality, inclusiveness, professionalism, prudence, self-perfection and fraternity are what we have always treasured, the heirloom that carried the Organization through the past hundred years of ebb and flow. They are the steps that allow us to rise to the challenges. They are the spirit that we must uphold.

But many things that we are familiar with will soon be neglected, and many unfamiliar things need to be familiarized. Our unique advantages have not been fully leveraged, our leadership not fully shown; the expectations of countries still waiting to be met while funding remains a hurdle for the growth of the Organization and its operations; strategic research capacity needs to be strengthened; and a balancing mechanism is yet to be built to bridge the chasm in policing capability, and better equip our member countries for combatting global crimes. These problems, if not duly recognized and tackled, will risk the Organization being marginalized or even eliminated.

Dear colleagues,

The times throw at us challenges and opportunities alike. INTERPOL, which connects police for a safer world, has fought crimes and guarded justice for almost a century. Now the flag is in our hands. We must ensure that it does not fall; its colours stay unblemished in this tempestuous age. We should hold

it high, high enough to scare off every criminal, enough to inspire hope among the peoples who yearn for peace, enough to allow our children to see the light of justice.

INTERPOL in the new age should be an INTERPOL that faces the future.

First, as it boasts of being a professional and technical organization in global police cooperation, it should become a major participant in global governance for security. Police are an important force in ensuring security, rule of law and order across the world, and as their Organization, we should participate in the discussions on global security issues, not simply stand by and watch. The Organization needs to have its own voice, place and plan regarding the strategic security agenda. The position paper in which we take a stance on global security is the first step.

Second, as it excels in supplying technical services to all police, it should become the headquarters of combat against global crimes. As crimes go global, so must our actions too. The Organization needs to unite forces, build platforms, and pool top-notch experts; it needs to enhance capability in strategic and tactical police support, response to cooperation requests, and organization of operations; it needs to become the hub for police intelligence, coordination and operations.

Third, as it links police authorities, it should become the leader of innovative global policing. For new crimes, we need a platform for cooperation among all stakeholders: countries, international organizations, private entities and civil society, one that can spread best policing practices, advanced technologies and equipment, and make guiding standards for police activities and technologies.

Fourth, as it promotes understanding and friendship, it should become a family for world police. Despite differences among countries, combating crimes and guarding the law is what police do as their nature prescribes. Professionalism and integrity is what made us friends who fought crimes side by side, and even more so in today's integrated and hi-tech world. The crimes we see are no longer those that a country can solve alone. Any crack on the globe may become a source of evil that can plague the world. Therefore it is imperative that police help each other, because it's helping ourselves.

The vision needs meticulous planning, and I am considering taking two steps:

Step one, from next year to 2023, the centenary of the Organization, in which we reinforce the framework defining the role of the Organization that faces the future, platforms against emerging crimes and a funding system that ensures its growth, with increased leadership, influence, effectiveness and cohesion as it assumes an essential role in global security governance.

Step two, from 2023 to 2030, when the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals will have been achieved, in which the Organization that faces the future will have been created, a united global front of police sharing information and reacting to crimes will have taken shape, a strategic ability to foresee and tackle future crimes enhanced meaningfully, a lack of balance in policing capabilities better addressed, and internal structures become more reasonable, making the Organization an important member in global security governance.

To realize this vision, four fulcra are of strategic importance. First is to strengthen global leadership, which is key to the survival and development of the Organization. We need to form stronger ties with leaders of interior, justice, security and police authorities, exchange views, coordinate actions and respond to their expectations. The participation of over 30 ministers and 50 police chiefs reflects such consensus, which I welcome and appreciate. The Organization needs to find the right way to grow, and in this search we will need strategic support, which will be best provided if we build on the strength of top international thinktanks and scholars. The proposal for a strategic research institute will be presented to the General Assembly, which I ask you to support.

Second is to combat cybercrime. Eventually, all serious global crimes will be inseparable from the Internet, and whoever possesses effective means and platforms against cybercrime will have the initiative.

Third is to cooperate with all stakeholders. Cooperation between countries, international organizations, private entities and civil society will be the main channel for fighting crimes. The high-level dialogue for countering cyber and financial crimes held last July and the ensuing operations were a good start.

Fourth is to balance capability. This is the basis for neutralizing global security threats. The resources of the Organization should be invested more in removing policing backwaters from the less-developed economies, and strengthening training systems for global police, in particular in developing countries to address their urgent needs. Working in the police entails high risks; there are over 12 million police officers in the world, the losses they suffer every year are as huge as the contribution they make. Here I would like to pay my homage to the police officers who have lost their lives, and their families, and express my gratitude to all who support police enforcement. I call on you to support the resolution to establish a foundation for the bereft police families and a “Hall of Glory” on our website.

Dear colleagues,

All great marches start with the first step. We are at the important juncture of implementing INTERPOL 2020 and envisaging the 2030 visions. The success of this General Assembly is yet a new milestone in the Organization’s hundred years of history.

We must create solidarity. Cooperation is embedded in the genes of the Organization, just as neutrality is its lifeline. INTERPOL is the platform for police cooperation, not an arena for competing interests. This is our unique advantage. We must hold dear the cooperative and neutral spirit the same way as we cherish our lives, and it is by doing so that the Organization can claim higher morality by representing the interests of all humanity. What is INTERPOL? It is you, police from all our member countries. You own this organization, and therefore you must think for the Organization, dispense with political distractions and all elements that could harm its unity, and protect its basic interests.

We must embrace changes. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*. As an international organization, how do we stay alive and stay young? No guarantee will come from anyone else except those of us who keep adapting, and this spirit is in our blood. A new organization for police cooperation that faces the future builds on its inheritance, reforms the backward and the unreasonable, and creates what is required by the times.

We must build strength. Security is a basic need for human survival, the common denominator of all countries. A safer world is what we have pursued for a century; a stronger organization is what is needed for fighting crimes and safeguarding peace and justice. This is what all police and the international community expect of us. We are the bridge that links past and future. It befalls our generation to make the Organization strong. We are at the right moment, in the right place and with the right people for this historic mission. So long as justice is on our side, there won’t be a battle that can’t be won.

And victory awaits us.

Xie Xie.

Shukran.

Thank you.

Gracias.

Merci.

(Note: This speech is translated from the original, delivered in Chinese)