

Homicide and Serial Sexual Crimes Conference

Lyon, France, 25 November 2008

Opening speech by [Ronald K. Noble](#) INTERPOL Secretary General

Dear colleagues,

I would like to welcome you to Lyon and to INTERPOL's General Secretariat Headquarters for the world's first Homicide and Serial Sexual Crimes Conference.

This is an important event for INTERPOL and for international police co-operation. It is important because the type of co-operation that you will discuss over the next two days is exemplary of what INTERPOL believes should be the model for 21st-century policing: that is, policing that no longer considers crimes with international elements to be the exception, but rather more and more the rule. To put it simply, for INTERPOL, the 21st-century globalization of all forms of human activity makes it almost impossible for police to do their training, collaboration, investigation and prosecution only within national boundaries.

Thirty-six countries are gathered here for the next two days because we believe that when it comes to serial killers and sex offenders, we need to seriously consider that they present a risk to more than one country.

Let me start by giving an example of a case that could exist in any one of your countries. It is a case in which investigators like yourselves have to make a decision as to the scope of the investigation and the extent to which international tools and resources should be exploited.

Just 10 days ago, on the 15th of November, a 51-year old man, was charged with "abduction and confinement" and for "rape with violence using a weapon". He was arrested after a prostitute whom he allegedly had raped complained to the police. This was also after three other prostitutes working in the same area, a Ukrainian, a Romanian, and an Algerian had disappeared. Following the man's arrest, his apartment was searched and DNA from two of the three missing prostitutes was found on jewellery and other items. The man had previously served 20 years in prison for armed robbery and confinement with torture and sexual subjugation.

To this day, there is no evidence that the man has committed crimes outside his country of residence and nationality.

Now, in a case like this one, what would be the likely standard operating procedure for any police force in any one of your countries?

Most probably, you would check the man's DNA against your national DNA database.

If he was a foreign national of a country with whom you had good bilateral relations, you might even ask that country to compare his name, DNA specimen and fingerprints against its national database.

But if he were a national of your own country or even a foreign national would you think to check his name, DNA and fingerprints against INTERPOL's global databases?

Dear colleagues, this is one of the most profound questions that police around the world need to ask themselves each and every day as they become aware of the tools and services that are available to them at the global level via INTERPOL.

At this conference we can begin to discuss and decide how to lay the groundwork for the development of standard operating procedures internationally for the most serious cases we are investigating nationally. We can do so with the goal of helping to identify more and more sex offenders and serial killers before they can do more harm and with the goal of solving more cases.

I have been promoting the concept of standard operating procedures internationally for eight years as INTERPOL's Secretary General. I have been to 120 of INTERPOL's 187 member countries to understand better how you investigate your cases nationally and internationally. I know the barriers that member countries' ministers, police and prosecutors believe exist to using international tools and services. I can assure you that there are no insurmountable boundaries to consulting international databases via INTERPOL.

I know the thirst that everyone has for statistics showing that something works before trying it, and I would have liked to have shared with you statistics on the percentage of serial killers and sex offenders who commit crimes in more than one country. But unfortunately, one can only generate meaningful statistics by investigating and solving cases with multiple country links. There are few such publicized cases.

Some studies show that sexual offenders have a 25-per cent chance of committing a second violent offense, either sexual or not, within five years of their first offense, and this number rises to 40 per cent after 15 years.

But, how much evidence do we need before we accept that we must look more and more to international tools and services when investigating serious crimes at the national level? There is documented evidence that such cases are not rare and many examples will be presented in the course of the next two days.

Among others, my colleague Emmanuel Leclaire will tell you tomorrow about a case some of you are probably already aware. It is an exemplary case that will serve this conference well to discuss. It involves a German national who was linked to two different murders in two different countries through DNA comparison.

I say that we must use our experience and common sense about human nature in order to recognize the need for us to expand the tools and services that we use and to expand the potential jurisdictions where the crime must be investigated.

In today's world of increasing international travel, where travelling abroad has become as easy and routine as taking a city bus, can we still afford to treat cases such as the one I told you about at the beginning of my remarks as a strictly national case?

I strongly believe that we cannot.

We cannot because we can no longer assume that a criminal acting in more than one country is an exceptional occurrence.

We cannot because we can no longer claim that global tools are not available for police worldwide to routinely share and compare information in a cost effective way.

We cannot because we would not want to tell any victim's family that we did everything we could to prevent the crime or to catch the murderer or rapist when we know deep in our hearts that we have not.

At INTERPOL, we have developed global co-operation tools that enable police to routinely share information with their colleagues worldwide. Using INTERPOL's secure global police communications system — I-24/7 — investigators can easily and safely share photos, fingerprints, DNA, and modus operandi with some or all INTERPOL member countries. We will also very soon launch an enhanced version of our Child Abuse Image Database that will enable specialized investigators to share child abuse images via I-24/7.

Take INTERPOL's DNA database for example.

The database currently contains over 77,000 profiles shared by 49 countries, a great success considering only 56 countries worldwide operate national DNA databases.

Out of the 165 positive identifications made on this database so far, four concerned sexual assaults and ten were murder cases in multiple countries.

As such, it represents a very powerful tool for investigators, especially to link murders and sexual offenses – if it is used systematically.

Now, let me give you examples of good practice.

On 28 April 2008, NCB Sweden informed INTERPOL that a man named Anders EKLUND, who had confessed to the murders of two young girls and had previously been convicted for sexual offences, had been working as a truck driver in Sweden and in other countries in Europe before his arrest. As a matter of routine co-operation and standard operating procedure internationally, Swedish authorities provided the man's fingerprints and DNA for police in other INTERPOL member countries to make identity checks in the course of their own investigations.

This was a quick and simple initiative, one that may help other investigators break cases and bring comfort to families still looking for justice for the loved ones they lost.

In fact, I am sorry to say that this initiative is one that is still too rare.

A very large proportion of the DNA profiles contained in the database came from only a handful of countries; a situation that I feel is truly inexplicable. And one of the objectives of the project that is the focus of this conference is to enable you to make the best use of the global tools that INTERPOL develops for you.

In September of this year, police in Luxembourg were investigating the murders of two homeless men and decided to share information through INTERPOL concerning a Brazilian vagrant who had been arrested in connection with these murders. During his interrogation, the man admitted that he had been living in Portugal, Spain and Germany and that he travelled regularly to these countries as well as to Switzerland and Austria.

Just a few days before, on 8 September, Portuguese police had shared information concerning an unsolved murder in Algarve, in the southern part of the country. The body had been found in an abandoned warehouse frequented by homeless people and the murderer was believed to be of Brazilian nationality.

Our officers at the General Secretariat immediately identified that there may be a potential link and informed Portuguese authorities. The information is presently being studied by the Portuguese police for their investigation. This case clearly demonstrates why it is so crucial that practices that are routine at the national level be also used at the regional or global level. In other words, what Swedish and Luxembourg authorities have done needs to become standard operating procedure internationally for police worldwide.

We can now come back to the case I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks. The man who is the main suspect in the disappearance of at least two prostitutes lives in a city that is situated less than 500 kilometres away from three other countries, with an international airport and a major seaport linking it to dozens of destinations in the Mediterranean and beyond; he was previously convicted for "abduction and confinement" and for "rape with violence using a weapon". In such a case, although there is nothing at this point leading investigators to believe that there may be international links, I strongly believe that his picture, fingerprints and DNA should be shared with police regionally and possibly also worldwide.

And unfortunately, as we speak, the man's DNA, and fingerprints have not yet been shared globally. But INTERPOL has made contact with the investigators in charge and we are hopeful that the authorities concerned will agree to share this crucial information.

My message to you today is very simple:

In the 21st century, routine exchange of information that exists at the national level needs to be extended to the global level. That needs to become our standard operating procedure internationally.

The responsibility that we feel to share crucial information throughout our country to better protect our citizens must now extend beyond our borders.

What is routine between colleagues at home must become routine with our colleagues worldwide.

INTERPOL is there to assist you in developing this capacity

Thank you very much.

I wish you a very fruitful conference.