

4th Annual Heads of NCBs Meeting

Lyon, France, 2 April 2008

Opening speech by Ronald K. Noble, INTERPOL Secretary General

Chiefs of police,
Heads of NCBs,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to see so many familiar faces – and so many new ones, too – for this, INTERPOL's fourth Heads of NCBs meeting. We have with us 19 new heads of NCBs, to whom I would like to say "welcome." And I would like to thank all of you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to attend this conference.

You are here today because you also recognise the importance of us being able to meet to discuss frankly and constructively the issues most affecting your countries and how INTERPOL can better support you in all of your crime-fighting activities. This conference is both a great opportunity for us to hear your concerns directly and to also seek your guidance and advice.

One of the conclusions agreed on when we met last year was for INTERPOL to support and enhance the operational capabilities of your NCBs. Over the next three days, we will discuss the initiatives we have been developing to strengthen our day-to-day operational capabilities, but with an eye towards the future through [police training and development](#), which we designated as our fourth core function in 2007.

I have spent a lot of time in the last year emphasising the concepts of "21st-century policing" and "capacity-building," because, to me, and to you, one cannot exist without the other, and they have come to define the work of INTERPOL as we move forward.

INTERPOL's ambitious vision for 21st-century policing calls for a new approach to fighting [terrorism](#) and other serious transnational crime, an approach that moves international policing from the sidelines to front and centre, both psychologically and operationally.

To turn this vision into reality, our efforts must include an equally ambitious vision of the role, scope and operational strengths of our [NCBs](#). The first question we must ask ourselves is what kind of NCB can make the most meaningful contribution to global crime-fighting efforts today? We have ideas, and these ideas are open for discussion.

First, we believe we need an NCB that has a strong presence in its own country, one that is highly visible within its national police structure and recognised as having unique expertise in international police co-operation matters.

The NCB should have a staff of dedicated officers with in-depth knowledge of the tools and services available through INTERPOL – both the INTERPOL General Secretariat and other INTERPOL NCBs in [member countries](#) – that are capable of recommending an appropriate course of action when an operational police issue with an international dimension arises, whether a complex investigation, a major event, or a man-made or natural disaster.

Finally, we need an NCB which can immediately identify police experts in a wide variety of specialties – from computer forensics to victim identification to ballistics – experts who can be called upon to respond to an urgent request for assistance from another country or region whose resources or expertise may be lacking or one which requires or would like to have an outside, independent perspective.

For example, just last month, within days of a request from Colombia, an [Incident Response Team](#) led by me and made up of officials from the General Secretariat and computer forensic experts from Australia and Singapore flew from Asia to Bogota to assist authorities with the forensic examination of laptops and other materials seized during a raid on a FARC rebel camp.

We communicated to all of you what we were requested to do and what we hoped to do. We could not have independence in such work without the commitment of Australia and Singapore, who sent their best experts to support this work.

Forensic experts from many of your countries contributed to the global effort to identify victims of the catastrophic tsunami in Southeast Asia in 2004. With the support of our [Sub-Regional Bureaus](#) and your generous offers of assistance we were able to do this. We accomplished something no other entity could: matching different countries' resources to urgent needs on a moment's notice.

In short, a highly effective NCB is one which acts as a hub for international police co-operation, providing police officers with expertise and assistance in international police matters.

And as we look at the crime and terrorist challenges facing us in today's globalised world, there is no doubt that the expertise and services that INTERPOL, its member countries, its NCBs and the [General Secretariat](#) can provide will be increasingly called upon in the future.

When police in Australia needed international assistance into an investigation of videos of [child sexual abuse](#) found on the Internet, they first turned to INTERPOL. When Mauritanian police seized their largest-ever cocaine haul, they called on INTERPOL for help in uncovering the international network involved in attempting to move the drugs from South America to Europe. When Colombia needed an objective and independent police voice in connection with a sensitive international investigation, they called upon INTERPOL. And when the United Arab Emirates needed help with the identification of [DNA profiles](#) collected in an armed robbery investigation, a check of INTERPOL's database allowed the identification of two of the perpetrators, and investigators working through INTERPOL linked the Dubai armed robbery to similar crimes in at least 20 other countries.

When I say INTERPOL, I don't just mean the General Secretariat. I don't just mean NCBs. I don't just mean police. This involves all law enforcement in member countries; this involves our NCBs, our SRBs and our offices in New York and Bangkok, Thailand.

INTERPOL's capability to take on these complicated tasks is wholly dependent on the effectiveness of our NCBs. And it is our joint responsibility to use this meeting to look critically at what additional steps need to be taken for us to be able to continue on this path. We have ideas that we want to test with you and share with you.

First, we must ensure the optimal use of the technology and tools we have developed. One of our top priorities must be to do everything possible to deploy INTERPOL's vital police tools and services to as many officers in as many countries as quickly and effectively as possible.

Our [MIND and FIND](#) technical solutions have been deployed in 21 member countries, with several more countries in the process of implementation. The increasing roll-out of MIND and FIND has led to significant growth in the number of travel documents identified as having been reported lost or stolen – from 6,100 documents in all of 2007 to more than 2,100 documents in the first three months of 2008 alone. This represents a 290 per cent increase. This percentage will expand more and more as more countries connect to MIND/FIND.

INTERPOL remains committed to working with all NCBs to develop other solutions to access our databases remotely which take into account their specific circumstances and requirements.

Last year, NCB Zagreb became the first NCB, the first member country, to offer access to INTERPOL databases through laptop computers and mobile phones, enabling officers to conduct database searches from remote areas in which no other police networks are available. A few months later, Croatian police identified and seized a luxury car which had been reported stolen just four days earlier by France after an officer conducted a search of INTERPOL's database of [stolen motor vehicles](#) directly from his patrol car.

Extending services beyond the NCB to law enforcement agencies throughout your countries makes NCBs stronger, makes your countries stronger, reinforces the network of INTERPOL, and makes it invaluable for us to expand our work along these lines.

Following the success of mobile expansion in Croatia, most countries in southeastern Europe are implementing this same method for both control and investigative purposes under the auspices of the multilateral Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

Second, we must put in place operational models and concepts that match the potential of our technology. A draft recommendation before you will urge all NCBs to formalise procedures for ensuring countries can confirm positive matches in our database of stolen and lost travel documents as quickly as possible, which is vital as the number of countries submitting records to the database and using MIND/FIND continues to multiply.

And our [Command and Co-ordination Centre](#) located at the General Secretariat will be there, available for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help you expedite your confirmations.

I know this work is resource-intensive and, as Secretary General, I have made it my priority during meetings with police chiefs and ministers in your countries to stress that NCBs must have the adequate resources to carry out this work effectively when called upon. When I go to your countries I fight for you. I fight for the NCBs because I know that INTERPOL can only be as strong as its NCBs.

Third, one of the great strengths of our organization is that its operational network embraces police forces and law enforcement services in 186 countries. To maximise this potential, we must ensure that the playing field is level for all countries. We must strive to narrow any gaps in capacity and training which could harm the safety and security of your citizens at the national level or which could compromise an international investigation.

We designated police training and development as our fourth core function in response to the overwhelming demand from you for more comprehensive training. To date, our training programmes and sessions have benefited almost 3,000 police and law enforcement officers in all of our working regions.

One indication of the success of our training initiative is that a participant in the first session of the INTERPOL International Police Training Programme said he personally would act as an "ambassador" for INTERPOL in his home country and share what he learned at INTERPOL with his colleagues back home, because he came to appreciate firsthand the essence of international policing and INTERPOL's singular ability to support the world's police.

The culmination of all these points I have discussed has led us to an exciting and new concept we are developing, a concept called INTERPOL Global and Regional Anti-Crime Centres. This initiative encompasses a range of global and regional anti-crime programmes known as [OASIS](#). With the extraordinary financial support of Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we are launching the first phase of the initiative in Africa to provide infrastructure and capacity support to countries throughout the region, to our NCBs throughout the region.

And I am thrilled to announce that the distinguished former Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Mr. Giuliano Zaccardelli, has agreed to be the director of OASIS Africa. As RCMP Commissioner, Mr. Zaccardelli made his mark as an impassioned and committed supporter of INTERPOL and of international police cooperation. He consistently turned words into action, and stepped up to offer Canada's assistance every time it was requested and needed.

Under his leadership, Canada was the first country to connect to our then-untested I-24/7 system and provided pivotal support for our bioterrorism prevention programme, the international tsunami victim identification effort, our NCBs in the Americas region, and many other initiatives. We could not find a more experienced and dedicated police professional to build this ambitious initiative from the ground up.

The programme is ambitious. And it could not be as ambitious without the support of Germany. It will cover such areas as specialised crime and developmental training, expansion of I-24/7 services, MIND/FIND implementation, building up our NCBs, and criminal intelligence analysis. Based on the outcomes of the initial phase – and we are confident it will be a success because all parties involved have shown their enthusiasm and dedication for making it so – OASIS will be expanded to other regions. It will be expanded not by increasing your dues, but by submitting proposals for funding.

Germany has committed 24 million euros over four years to support OASIS. This substantial investment is acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of the world today, and of the fact that any hurdles to fighting crime in Africa will have negative consequences not only for German citizens, not only for European citizens, but people in all regions.

Finally, I ask that all of us work together to reinforce our regional structures. Recent joint police operations at the regional and sub-regional level highlighted the effectiveness and value of having an operational INTERPOL presence within our working regions to support NCBs in tackling specific crimes. Through OASIS, we can focus more resources, more effort, more energy – not just in Africa, but in other regions as well.

As an example, an operation carried out last year by seven NCBs in Central America and supported by our Sub-Regional Bureau in San Salvador, El Salvador, uncovered more than 650 stolen cars in its first phase. We saw similarly impressive results from joint operations involving 12 NCBs in southern Africa co-ordinated by the Sub-Regional Bureau in Harare, Zimbabwe .

And in Asia, joint operations involving five NCBs and two Sub-Bureaus, with co-ordination by the General Secretariat and LOBANG, disrupted illegal football gambling activities by organized crime groups in the region, with more than 430 individuals arrested and hundreds of thousands of dollars in criminal proceeds confiscated.

As you can see, our organization has made tremendous progress over the years. But success comes at a price: our resources – NCBs, SRBs and the General Secretariat alike – are stretched to the maximum. We have committed to limit the increases in statutory contributions that we request of our member countries. Starting from 2009, you will see a reduction in the contributions required, a reduction more significant than we saw last year.

There is going to be a shift, a shift which already started with our bioterrorism prevention programme, with initiatives supported by the European Commission and, most recently, the great support of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We are going to seek to get voluntary contributions to support our significant initiatives in your regions to support you, our NCBs.

If you consider our achievements so far, it is clear that we are delivering benefits to global policing which far exceed what would seem possible or what seems possible by just looking at our balance sheet. That is why INTERPOL will continue to approach governments, including ministries of foreign affairs, as well as foundations and the private sector to obtain additional funding on a voluntary basis. I repeat on a voluntary basis. These resources will ultimately benefit police and law enforcement at the national level

and your NCBs, and will enable all of us to enhance the capacity of police and law enforcement worldwide in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

We are now exploring ways to make the most efficient use of the resources we do have and to provide even greater support to our member countries without sacrificing service levels or delivery. Our new project, I-link, will enable investigators and analysts in your countries to conduct their own searches of [INTERPOL databases](#), eliminating the need for human intervention at the General Secretariat. But we are not going to stop there. It might turn out that I-link can only give us a third, 30 per cent, of what is possible. We're going to find ways to give you 100 per cent of what is possible in terms of searching one another's messages in a free-text manner, if possible.

INTERPOL also hopes to streamline the publication of [notices](#). That more and more notices are being requested by our NCBs means that you all recognise their singular and essential value for alerting your counterparts in other countries of fugitives and other dangerous criminals.

But many of your NCBs have equal expertise to the General Secretariat in generating notices. We have to find a way for you to generate notices, for our quick review of the notice and for the notice to be published. There is no reason all of the labour has to be done at the General Secretariat when you can do it just as effectively.

The annual increase in notices published – more than 150 per cent since 2003 – puts tremendous pressure on our police and legal officers, translators and others involved in the process. Either we hire more people or we change our approach, and we want to change our approach. As a first step, we will ask you during this conference to fill out a survey on your use of notices and diffusions, so that we can properly assess the best methods for alleviating the strains on the organization without diminishing the intrinsic effectiveness and purpose of our notices.

None of what I have mentioned would have been possible and none of what we hope to accomplish will be possible without the continued support that I, as Secretary General, have from the dedicated police and law enforcement officers you have sent to work at the INTERPOL General Secretariat and from our permanent staff located in Lyon, in our SRBs around the world, and our offices in New York and Bangkok, Thailand.

We also wouldn't be able to do what we have been able to do without the strong support of our [Executive Committee](#). Zulmar Pimentel Dos Santos, our Delegate from Brazil, travelled from Brazil to be here with us in order to show the support of the Executive Committee. We also need you, those of you who are interested in making INTERPOL stronger to compete, to be on our various committees.

The concepts and initiatives I have discussed lie at the heart of 21st-century policing and capacity-building. We believe that only through sustained and collaborative commitment will we be able to address these and other challenges head on.

I look forward to working with you this week and after this week in order to make sure we at the INTERPOL General Secretariat are responsive to your needs.

INTERPOL is not some building. It is not some office. It is not some people working in various offices around the world. INTERPOL represents the ideal that I have referred to time and time again: the ideal that you know and you learn as police officers at the national level that we have to make the world understand.

Whenever a police officer at the national level signals for help or assistance, police officers anywhere in that jurisdiction know that they must respond instantly and urgently because the safety and security of a colleague – and probably their citizens – is at stake.

That same urgency that we feel at the national level – that we understand at the national level and that we don't have to explain at the national level – we have to feel at the international level. That's what the ideal of INTERPOL is in my mind. That's what we as INTERPOL General Secretariat staff and your supporters and colleagues want to make the ideal for INTERPOL in the future – an ideal that becomes a reality for us all.