

9th Meeting of the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO)

Accra, Ghana, 3 October 2007

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

Honourable Minister of Interior of Ghana, Mr Nana Obiri Boahen,
President of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), Mr Ibn Chambas,
Chairman of WAPCCO, Mr Kouassi Yapo,
Inspector General of Ghana Police Service, Mr Patrick Kwateng Acheampong
Chiefs of police of WAPCCO,
INTERPOL colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me express my sincere appreciation to the members of WAPCCO, led by its current chairman, the Director-General of the Ivorian National Police, Mr. Kouassi Yapo, for once again inviting me here, and also to the Ghana Police Service, led by Inspector General of Police Patrick Kwateng Acheampong, for hosting this important conference. It is my second time to visit Ghana as INTERPOL's Secretary General – Ghana graciously hosted the [18th INTERPOL African Regional Conference](#) in 2005 – and to experience the warm hospitality of the Ghanaian people.

Before I proceed with my remarks, it is my great pleasure to announce that Mr David Aseante-Apeatu, Deputy Commissioner of the Ghana Police Service, has been appointed as INTERPOL's new Director for Specialized Crime and Analysis. This is a key post at the General Secretariat and, in his new capacity; David will oversee and further develop INTERPOL's work on our six crime priority areas and notably the support we deliver to our [member countries](#) in major international investigations. I am confident that the experience and skills that David brings to the General Secretariat will greatly help us to develop new ideas and initiatives and ultimately contribute to make INTERPOL even stronger than it is now. I ask you to provide him with all your support as his achievements will also be your achievements.

Meetings with the African police chiefs' bodies are extremely valuable opportunities for INTERPOL. We want INTERPOL's tools and services to closely match your respective operational and strategic policing needs. In this complex world, where transnational crime networks continue to re-invent and adapt themselves, the INTERPOL community – and that includes all of us in this room – must be always a step ahead, ready to face head-on any emerging security risks.

No country or region in the world is immune from crime and [terrorism](#). Here in Western Africa, we are faced with challenges and threats, including [drug trafficking](#), [trafficking of children](#) for child labor and slavery, and the trafficking of small arms. If left unabated, these threaten the social, economic and political stability of the region. We all know the seriousness of these crimes and what it would do to our respective societies.

Illegal drug trafficking and the use of West Africa as a transit platform for cocaine trafficking from South America to Europe is a significant challenge, for both this region and INTERPOL. The Economic Community of Western African States ([ECOWAS](#)) recognises this danger and it has requested the Director-General of

the Inter-Governmental Action Group against [Money Laundering](#) and Terrorist Financing to include in its mandate the investigation of these crimes.

To illustrate the magnitude of the problem, let me give you two examples – in each case INTERPOL was asked to give support by the countries:

On 3 April 2007, 635 kilograms of cocaine were seized in Jugudul, Guinea Bissau. Two Colombian suspects were also arrested.

Less than a month later, on 1 May, 629 kilograms of cocaine were seized in Nouadhibou, Mauritania. The cocaine came from South America. As a result of the international part of the investigation, suspects were arrested in Belgium and Morocco.

This drug problem is tightly connected to other recurring crimes in the region: corruption, arms trade, terrorism and many others. The [UNODC](#) stated that there is a link between the financing of terrorism and the activities of these cocaine dealers in specific countries in West and Central Africa. They also reported that one of the two Colombian suspects arrested in Guinea Bissau was a member of the FARC terrorist group.

As chiefs of police tasked with dealing with the problem of this magnitude and geographical scope, let me ask you: How does one effectively deal with these crimes that go well beyond your geographical area? What tools and assistance do you need to enhance your operations? Today, the effectiveness of traditional law enforcement strategies and responses is hampered when faced with highly sophisticated criminal groups acting strategically at the international level, simply because most strategies are focused on national policing rather than international policing. During the 19th INTERPOL Americas Regional Conference last week in Bogota, Colombia, I talked about the vision of a 21st-century INTERPOL. You see, international policing until about a few years ago has been characterised by simple exchanges of police information, a conference here and there, and some training exchange programs. The actual crime-fighting remained defined and enclosed within each of our national borders. As we all realize, this system no longer holds true for the present. The traditional distinction between national and international policing is increasingly becoming obsolete.

The challenges we face now are local, national and global. So must be our response.

And what does this mean for INTERPOL and WAPCCO?

In line with this vision, INTERPOL is committed to support your regional crime priorities and policing needs in the following three areas which are crucial to our success: providing police in West Africa extended access to our [databases](#); training; and facilitating joint police operations.

First, is the delivery of INTERPOL tools and services to investigators in the field through the expansion of the [I-24/7](#) system. We have already started the process through the successful roll-out of the I-24/7 system that brought the different INTERPOL tools and services in every [National Central Bureau](#) (NCB) worldwide, and we will not stop until police units beyond the NCBs will also have access to these services. Nigeria has already expanded the I-24/7 system beyond its NCB, and INTERPOL is committed to help all other WAPCCO countries in doing the same.

Second, is the provision of tailor-made trainings for the police officers in the region. INTERPOL, through the Sub-Regional Bureau (SRB) in Abidjan, has conducted several operational training workshops to police officers in the region and will continue to expand and built its training program to reflect upon your region's specific policing needs and security challenges. We believe that in providing training, we are not only investing in individual police officers but also investing on the future security of the region.

And lastly, INTERPOL will actively support joint police operations in the region. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, INTERPOL provided direct investigative support by deploying [Incident Response Teams](#),

composed of INTERPOL staff and experts from other countries, to assist authorities in Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania in the two cocaine smuggling cases investigation in both countries. This has led to arrests in Belgium and Morocco.

But even more than the General Secretariat, it is the SRB here in Abidjan that provides you with regionally-based police support. Among other anti-crime operations in the region, SRB Abidjan, together with INTERPOL SRBs in Buenos Aires and Harare, as well as national drug agencies, national customs and the [World Customs Organization](#), is currently involved in Project PROTEUS that aims at combating cocaine trafficking originating in South America and transiting through Western Africa before, in most cases, reaching Europe.

I can assure that you will not be left to your own devices in combating this threat. INTERPOL is committed to give you all the support you need. With a simple request to our [Command and Co-ordination Centre](#), INTERPOL will take immediate and urgent action to support your investigative work. And if we cannot do it from Lyon or from our SRB in Abidjan, we will immediately deploy INTERPOL staff to your region to help you here. And if we do not have the needed police expertise immediately available at the General Secretariat, we will use our network of NCBs worldwide to meet your needs.

Dear colleagues, the safety and security in this region is our joint responsibility. This is why INTERPOL has created an SRB in the region. And because we know that much more still needs to be done in each of the areas I mentioned – database extension, Police Training and Development and operational support – we are currently in the process of developing Global and Regional Anti-Crime Centres. The centres will offer a broad range of new services and will fully integrate the operational and capacity-building efforts we believe are necessary to combat global transnational crime problems that the world as whole is facing. To build these centres we will try to obtain additional resources from governments and the private sector alike to further develop our policing activities.

In closing my remarks, I am asking each one of you to help us further develop the SRB as an important link between, regional and global crime-fighting initiatives. This will require efforts. I believe that we should strive to find ways to have additional seconded officers in our SRBs, and in an ideal world, each country in the region would do so. For the SRB to be fully effective, it also requires your leadership and guidance. So please continue providing it to us.

Thank you.