

8th meeting of Heads of African National Drugs Services

Arusha, Tanzania, 9-10 July 2007

Opening speech by Jean-Michel Louboutin, Executive Director, Police Services

Mr Mwema, Inspector General of the Tanzanian police,
Mr Vice-President of INTERPOL for Europe,
Directors-General of Police and Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Mr [Ronald Noble](#), Secretary General of INTERPOL, I would like to welcome you all here today, and to thank the Tanzanian authorities for their excellent work in organizing and hosting this [8th Meeting of Heads of African National Drugs Services](#).

Over the next two days, we will be covering a large number of subjects related to the fight against [drugs](#) in Africa.

At this point, I should like to quote a few statistics which highlight the extent to which this is a subject of great importance and concern.

In 2006, the world heroin production was estimated at 606 tons, cocaine production at 984 tons, and cannabis at 42,000 tons. With the exception of cocaine, drug production has risen by about 50% in the space of 10 years.

In 2005, it was estimated that there were over 200 million drug users worldwide.

This gives us some idea of the scale of the problem, with its all-too-familiar consequences on public health and security.

The African continent, viewed as a whole, is a region of production, consumption and transit for drugs.

Although the problem varies enormously according to the type of drug involved and from one region to another, the overall drug-trafficking situation in Africa has considerably worsened these past years, particularly with the explosion in cocaine trafficking between South America and Africa. For example, West Africa has become a hub for the traffic in cocaine between South America and Europe, alongside the more traditional trafficking routes via the Caribbean.

The subjects being discussed at this meeting have been chosen in order to give a clear picture of the current situation and highlight the efforts deployed by member countries, but especially to identify the shortcomings and the requirements that need to be addressed in order to effectively fight drug-related crime and criminals.

INTERPOL is making resources available – resources which must be used. Since the last meeting in 2005 in Accra, INTERPOL has been pursuing the development of its three core functions:

- providing a speedy, secure communications network
- developing [global databases](#)
- providing round-the-clock, multi-faceted [operational support](#).

Twenty-two new African countries have been connected to I-24/7, INTERPOL's global communications network. Only one country on the African continent remains to be connected – Somalia. We are confident that this will be achieved today. This will then mean that all 186 of INTERPOL's member countries will be connected to each other.

In Africa, 13 countries have already connected, or are in the process of connecting, their national departments – outside the National Central Bureaus – to the I-24/7 network.

This is the case for South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania.

This network enables the exchange of essential information for tackling international crime and gives access to the Organization's global databases, such as the nominal database for wanted persons, the Stolen and Lost Travel Document Database, which now contains over 15 million entries, the Fingerprints Database, or the DNA Database: in other words, the basic tools for all police activity.

These databases are active memories containing vast amounts of information on drug traffickers.

With the aid of new technological developments, the INTERPOL communications network is to be expanded to develop and facilitate access to these tools and services to front-line units.

Operational support mechanisms have been developed and put in place to support countries in their daily endeavours against drug trafficking: specific projects, alerts, and particularly investigation support teams to facilitate and support investigations at the international level, as recently in Guinea-Bissau or in Mauritania for example, following two record seizures of cocaine involving more than 12 countries in different continents.

The operational, technical and analytical capabilities of our Sub-Regional Bureaus have therefore been increased accordingly. They are now in an even better position to provide immediate, on-the-spot assistance by means of INTERPOL services.

However, even if the efforts of the international community give rise to better results in terms of seizures and arrests, it has to be admitted that these are not sufficient and that the situation is deteriorating.

Results in this area can only come, not merely from words and speeches, but from a firm commitment with regard to methods and resources, enhanced co-operation on the part of all those involved, and specific concerted and co-ordinated initiatives.

All these initiatives must be taken within the scope of operations and projects set up in close collaboration with the regional Chiefs of Police Organizations and the international organizations involved in anti-drug trafficking activities in the field. Together with the necessary resources and investments to enable those responsible for tackling the matter on the ground to do so on equal terms, this type of co-ordination, and the resulting synergy and harmony of action, is the key to success.

I would like to thank you for listening, and wish you every success in your meeting.