

INTERPOL Asian Bioterrorism Workshop

Welcome address by Khoo Boon Hui, Commissioner of Police, Singapore Police Force
Singapore, 27 March 2006

*Senior Minister of State for Law & Home Affairs, Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Good morning. Welcome to the [INTERPOL Asian Regional Workshop on Preventing Bioterrorism](#).

I recall vividly the 1st INTERPOL Global Conference on Preventing Bioterrorism held in Lyon last March. At the invitation of the INTERPOL Secretary General, Mr [Ronald Noble](#), I attended the conference and also spoke on Singapore's experience with SARS.

It was during the conference that Mr Noble approached me with the request that Singapore host the Asian leg of the [bioterrorism](#) workshop. It was indeed an honour to be asked, and I agreed without hesitation. After all, the Singapore Police Force has enjoyed a good working relationship with INTERPOL, and we place strong emphasis on counter-bioterrorism development efforts and inter-agency cooperation. Furthermore, we see that there is great value in this series of workshops.

I am heartened to see so many of our regional counterparts, strategic partners and guests here with us today. I thank all of you for taking time off your busy schedules and honouring the workshop with your presence. The fact that you are here clearly demonstrates the importance that the region is placing on the subject of bioterrorism, which together with nuclear terrorism, are the only two threats capable of mass destruction.

Crime and terrorism

In the past, tackling crime and criminal activities was a police department's traditional role. However, following the 9/11 incidents, there is now a need for police forces all over the world to devote more resources to counter-terrorism development and initiatives. The Singapore Police Force is no exception and is doing so without compromising its crime-fighting responsibilities.

Indeed, it is by strengthening their crime-fighting capabilities that police forces can better equip themselves to deal with the threat of [terrorism](#). Oftentimes, in the process of committing a terrorist act or preparing for one, the perpetrator would likely have committed a series of other offences. These include the smuggling of prohibited items into and out of countries and entering countries illegally.

This is further illustrated in the 9/11 Commission Report released by The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. It was discovered that, collectively, the 9/11 hijackers had presented passports manipulated in a fraudulent manner, made detectable false statements on visa applications, made false statements to border officials to gain entry into the United States and violated immigration laws while in the country.

We also cannot ignore evidence which shows that criminal activities like money laundering sustain and drive terrorism and terrorist groups. This evidently highlights the point that we cannot look at terrorism in

isolation. We must confront crime to defeat terrorism. And, indeed, we can use the same strategies of engaging the community to deal with both crime and terrorism.

Furthermore, to be successful, police agencies cannot work in silos. Various agencies with overlapping work areas and complementary capabilities and expertise must work hand-in-glove with one another. This is especially important when dealing with the emerging threat of bioterrorism. As demonstrated by the rapid spread of avian flu, bioterrorism agents can be carried swiftly across national boundaries, therefore rapidly bringing what could be a local terrorism problem into the international arena.

Importance of INTERPOL

INTERPOL is a pivotal organization uniquely structured to help countries achieve the level of international co-operation that will be required to deal with bioterrorism. I am encouraged to see that INTERPOL has taken a strong interest and made tremendous strides in addressing the threat posed by bioterrorism, which requires a global response if it is to be dealt with effectively.

The world has indeed become smaller with the great technological leaps in communication and air travel. Security is a global concern. We recognise the crucial role that INTERPOL plays in today's security climate, and I am happy to announce that the Singapore Police Force will be for the first time attaching an officer to INTERPOL headquarters in Lyon.

Concluding remarks

I trust that over the course of this workshop, you will be able to gain further insight into a multitude of bioterrorism-related issues and strategies, as well as widen your network of strategic partners.

It is now my honour to invite our guest of honour, Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs, Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, to deliver the keynote address for the workshop.