

Opening remarks

by [Ronald K. Noble](#), INTERPOL Secretary General
18th INTERPOL African Regional Conference
Accra, Ghana (13-15 July 2005).

Mr. President, [Jackie Selebi](#), Commissioner of Police for South Africa;
Inspector General of Police P.K. Acheampong
INTERPOL [Executive Committee](#) Members
Chiefs of Police
Heads of Delegation
Heads of NCB's
Distinguished guests
Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your warm reception this morning.

My particular gratitude goes to the Ghana police force, the Ministry of Interior, the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in Accra, the organizing committee, to my dedicated staff and to others who have contributed to the impeccable organization of this conference.

INTERPOL Regional Conferences, as each of you knows, have become an increasingly important tool in furthering our Organization's fight against [terrorism](#) and international crime.

We are grateful for the outstanding support of Ghana, in enabling us to conduct our work at this [18th African Regional Conference](#) here in Accra.

Let me begin by reminding you and all of us that INTERPOL is not something far away from your police service or your country.

INTERPOL is not only its Executive Committee though our President and Executive Committee provide us necessary leadership and strong support in the police community.

INTERPOL is not only its National Central Bureaus of [countries](#) throughout the world though without NCB's INTERPOL could not exist just like a body could not function without a heart.

INTERPOL is not only composed of dedicated staff located in Lyon, Abidjan, Harare, Nairobi, Buenos Aires, El Salvador and Bangkok though it is the General Secretariat consisting of permanent and seconded staff that makes it possible for INTERPOL's NCB's to function in a coordinated way over a countries in four languages 24 hours a day.

In fact, INTERPOL is all of us; each and every police chief, police officer and member of a police organization in each and every country throughout the world must consider himself or herself to be a part of INTERPOL.

They must want to help a police officer in another part of the world, perhaps speaking another language when that police officer asks for help using INTERPOL channels.

This is the ideal of INTERPOL.

I can give you other examples of what I mean by the ideal of INTERPOL.

Police chiefs must want to send their officers to work in INTERPOL sub-regional bureaux and at General Secretariat Headquarters in Lyon.

Police chiefs must consider INTERPOL so important to the safety and security of their respective countries that they make budget allowances for the payment of their countries dues; for the adequate funding of the NCB's; and for the attendance by themselves or their deputies and Heads of NCB's at all General Assemblies and Regional Conferences.

Finally, police chiefs at the national and regional level must work closely with the INTERPOL family to design and implement strategies to make their countries, their regions and the world safer.

These are but some examples of what I mean by the ideal of INTERPOL and this is what we at the General Secretariat and all of you and your colleagues must strive towards.

I say again: INTERPOL is all of us.

And all of us must be concerned about terrorism. Africa has had its own experience with international terrorism for example in Dar-Es-Salam, Nairobi, Djerba, Casablanca, Cairo and Algiers to name but a few.

Africa and INTERPOL did not need the suicide London terrorist attacks on trains and on a bus last week to remind us how critical it was for all of us to work to prevent terrorists from killing our citizens and visitors to our country.

On the very day (7 July 2005) that terrorists were carrying out the attacks in London using explosives, the Chairman of EAPCCO (Andre Quilindo), INTERPOL Vice-President for Europe (Rodolfo Ronconi) and I were in Khartoum, Soudan. Why? We were celebrating the graduation of 18 police officers from 9 East African countries who had successfully completed INTERPOL's first dog sniffers' trainers program under the leadership of the Soudanese police.

The [terrorist attacks in London](#) show the potential value of sniffer dogs trained to detect explosives. We know that the proper deployment of trained sniffer dogs can help to prevent terrorist attacks in Africa and in its airports.

The London incidents should strengthen our collective resolve to combat terrorism. No one country or region will achieve success in this area on its own, but our global efforts to exchange information, notably through the use of [INTERPOL's I-24/7 system](#) and its global databases will most certainly go a long way to preventing future attacks and apprehending fugitive terrorists.

There are reports coming out of London that the mastermind and others behind the London attacks may already be outside of England.

Yet, fundamental questions remain to be answered. How did they plan it? Where did the explosives come from? Where were they trained? Did any of them travel inside or outside England? Did any of them use stolen travel documents? What telephone numbers were called?

It would be impossible for London's Metropolitan Police Department to investigate these terrorist bombings thoroughly and to answer these questions without consulting INTERPOL, our member countries and our databases using our state of the art I-24/7 secure global police communications system. Already NCB London and INTERPOL's General Secretariat have participated in an important strategic meeting convened by the Metropolitan Police Department. You and I know that INTERPOL's NCB's and General Secretariat and I-24/7 can facilitate the London investigation in a significant way, and obviously so does

the Met. While we condemn these horrible attacks, we commend the high level of professionalism and great international cooperation shown by our UK brother and sister police officers.

I will communicate to Sir I. Blair, the Commissioner of the Met, that at this meeting we expressed both our outrage at the attacks and our solidarity with the people and police of the UK. Here in Africa there is cause for optimism that if African countries because if African police and NCB's are called to help with this or any international criminal investigation, we are better prepared than we have ever been in our history to help.

Indeed, if we consider what the African Member Countries of INTERPOL have achieved over the last few years, one thing is very clear: we are on the right track, and your efforts have made INTERPOL an Organization that has become highly relevant and active throughout Africa.

Nowhere is INTERPOL's vision of structured police cooperation at cross-border, regional and global level better exemplified than in Africa. Africa has four strong regional chiefs of police organizations. Much of their strength comes from their dual role as Police Chiefs of INTERPOL NCB's and of regional Police Chiefs' Organizations for Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

Right here in Africa we have a model that we would like to see replicated in other parts of the world, because while the Police Chiefs have the expertise and the authority to drive crime fighting initiatives in response to regional trends, INTERPOL can provide additional tools and resources to strengthen those initiatives on a global basis. I'm thinking of course of our I-24/7 Secure Global Communications Network, of databases such as the Stolen Motor Vehicle database which is used widely and with great effect in Africa, or of investigative expertise in fields like terrorism, drugs, human trafficking and environmental crime.

INTERPOL has come a long way in providing these operational police tools to its African Member Countries. When we last met for an African Regional Conference, in July 2003 in Zambia, (just two years ago) only **3** North African countries were connected to I-24/7, and the only connection in Sub-Saharan Africa was at the SRB in Abidjan. Since then, a huge amount of work has gone into connecting the rest of Africa to the I-24/7 Network. As of this morning, **31** of the **53** African countries have been connected to I-24/7, as well as all three SRBs. It is our expectation that Ghana will be connected later today.

We aim to connect the remaining 21 African countries as soon as possible.

Consider also the fact that some of our African countries now connected to I-24/7 had never been connected to the old X-400 system. In other words, NCBs like Asmara in Eritrea, which was connected on 29 June of this year, now have an electronic connection to other NCBs for the first time in their history. Other African countries will benefit similarly.

The roll-out of the I-24/7 Network in Africa has already led to concrete results. Staff at the Dar-Es-Salaam NCB were able to send information about 4 fugitives, including photographs, to NCBs throughout the world. This would not have been possible via X400. In Botswana, the NCB received information that an individual wanted in a fraud case would be traveling to India via South Africa. Thanks to NCB staff in Gabarone and Pretoria, and their I-24/7 connection, it was possible to apprehend the fugitive at Johannesburg airport. These are examples of INTERPOL's approaching its ideal.

Our next aim is to have the I-24/7 connection extended beyond the NCB, to police and customs authorities in the field. This is already the case in South Africa, where border control officials have access to certain INTERPOL services. This has already let to stolen travel documents being identified and individuals being arrested.

But there are other areas in which the cooperation between the African Chiefs of Police and INTERPOL such as the Sudanese Dog Handler Initiative that I mentioned earlier. Police Chiefs in Eastern Africa (EAPCCO) thought that security in the region could be enhanced by having police dogs able to detect explosives, and trained police officers to handle these dogs. The next step was to ask INTERPOL for

assistance, a step made easier by the fact that our Sub-Regional Bureau in Nairobi also acts as the EAPCCO Secretariat. And, as a result, with the assistance of the Government of Sudan, which hosted the training course, we were able to provide help and funding to acquire the dogs. We need to create a regional dog sniffers training programs for all of Africa!

With the strong support of the Police Chiefs in the region, African police forces are at present taking a more active role in the running of INTERPOL than at any time in our history.

We now have 36 officers seconded by 19 different countries from the INTERPOL Africa region, compared with only 23 in 2001. 5 of those officers are working at the General Secretariat. I have appointed INTERPOL's first an African Director, Adamu Mohamed. He has been assigned to one of the most Directorates at INTERPOL (NCB Services and I-24/7 Development) There is no more important element of INTERPOL than our NCB's and there is no more important tool for our NCB's than I-24/7. There are now two Directors of African origin and 4 Assistant Directors of African origin. Prior to my being elected Secretary General there were 0.

But Africa has been making advances at INTERPOL in other areas as well. Since 2001, 8 African countries which had never been represented at INTERPOL before now have staff either at the General Secretariat or in the SRBs.

We have 31 African police officers seconded to SRBs in Abidjan, Harare and Nairobi.

The Sub-Regional Bureaus are a critical component in the Organization's regional service delivery. In my view, each police chief in Africa should send at least one police officer to at least one of the INTERPOL regional bureaus in Africa. The respective government and police chief should plan and budget for such placement. We cannot help you keep your citizens and visitors to your country as safe as they should be unless you send your best officers to work at INTERPOL.

I have talked about how we have improved in our service to African countries and in staff promotions, but what about our treatment of police officers and INTERPOL staff working in the regions. How have we done in this area? It was pointed out to me some time ago by Mr Omar Iddi Mahita, Inspector General of the Tanzania Police Force and current President of [SARPCCO](#), that the disparity between salaries and monthly allowances at the General Secretariat and the SRBs was a cause for concern. I promised to correct any unfair disparity that existed.

Under INTERPOL President Selebi's leadership, the Executive Committee has just approved our proposal to amend this situation, which results a significant pay rise, starting in July 2005, for all salaried officials in Nairobi, Abidjan and Harare: without wishing to discuss individual salaries here, when I say significant I mean between 25% and 40% for the Heads of Bureaus, and in the region of 30% for the network analysts. Compensatory allowances for SRB staff have increased threefold. Over the next six years, their salaries will further increase, to reach equivalence with Lyon salaries in 2010. This reflects our recognition of the SRBs as central to our mission, and the value we place in our SRB personnel. No matter where the duty station, each INTERPOL official should be treated equally.

Let me say publicly and with all do respect to the Chief of Police for Tanzania that INTERPOL needs more police chiefs to complain like you complain. Through your complaints you have brought unfair treatment by INTERPOL of its regional staff to my attention, and with the support of our President and Executive Committee we have corrected the problem. By doing so, we have not only made INTERPOL a better organization, but we have made it more attractive to police officials throughout the world.

Let me take a moment to highlight one of the most significant developments in INTERPOL's history – South African Police Chief Jackie Selebi's election as the Organization's first African President. He is a true visionary. He is a great believer in the ideal of INTERPOL. He is an extraordinary strategic thinker. He cares about the well-being not only of INTERPOL's African but also of the Americas, Asian and European regions. He cares deeply about the well being of the police officer working under difficult circumstances in

villages, towns and cities throughout the world. For me he has been the beacon helping me to lead INTERPOL's General Secretariat in the best way possible.

He is the right man, at the right place at the right time as far as INTERPOL is concerned. He is the ideal President that INTERPOL could possibly have at this point in its history.

Both President Selebi and I strongly believe that INTERPOL police should try to work closely with all law enforcement entities in their country. This is the case with wildlife crime, an area of particular importance in Africa. INTERPOL recently provided funding for planes for the Tanzanian National Park Service. The proposal had been reviewed by INTERPOL's Environmental Crimes Committee and was presented and endorsed at the 5 th International Conference on Environmental Crime, held in Lyon last month. This initiative reflects INTERPOL's goals of supporting ALL areas of law enforcement in the most relevant way, and of taking into account regional and sub-regional priorities.

INTERPOL is also particularly concerned about a relatively new global crime trend, which particularly affects Africa and demands our urgent attention. Fake drugs for malaria, tuberculosis and HIV, containing no active pharmaceutical elements, have emerged as one of the world's major counterfeiting problems, and have a devastating impact on society. Faced with a clear and proven organized crime involvement, the risk to the lives of millions of people, and the current absence of an international body that can take the lead in this field, INTERPOL has decided to act to counter industrial-scale counterfeiting of life-saving medicines.

Dear Colleagues, your region is particularly active, and the close cooperation between the national police forces and the INTERPOL NCBs, the strong commitment of the regional Chiefs of Police bodies and the support they receive from the SRBs, have allowed us to implement important law enforcement initiatives and operations. I thank you for your great support. However, your continued support remains essential, and as I said I would urge all of you to consider seconding additional officers, both to the Sub-Regional Bureaus and to the General Secretariat. I am convinced that we all can gain from having a strong presence from as many countries as possible within INTERPOL. Our officers are there for you, and their presence in our Organization will enable them to be of direct assistance to their national police force in all international police matters.

Let me finish my remarks by extending an invitation to all of you. Many of you attended the first INTERPOL global bio-terrorism conference, which was held in Lyon in March of this year. I would like to draw your attention to a follow-up event, the African regional bio-terrorism training workshop, to be held in Cape Town, South Africa from 21 to 23 November 2005. I hope you will take full advantage of this workshop; it is crucial that delegates use this forum to share their experience in preparing for bio-terrorism and also for natural outbreaks of diseases. We hope to have a high and active participation.

I wish you successful and productive 18 African Regional Conference.

Thank you.