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REMARKS

by

Ronald K. Noble

INTERPOL Secretary General

**ID World Abu Dhabi**

***Migration: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Challenge***

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Sheik Saif Bin Zahyed Al NAHYAN, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the United Arab Emirates,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamou aleikoum.

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be with you for this ID World International Congress here in Abu Dhabi.

Please allow me to first thank our gracious Emirati hosts for their kindness and outstanding hospitality. Hospitality is one of the strongest values and traditions of the people of this region and anyone who visits this country at once understands why it is renowned worldwide for its warm welcome and utmost class.

But the United Arab Emirates is not just fine traditions; it is also resolutely looking to the future. And this event is just one more example of the vision of the country's people and leaders. In particular when it comes to innovation in terms security, I would like to commend Sheik Saif Bin Zahyed Al NAHYAN for his support of this important event and commitment to enhancing international law enforcement cooperation.

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At INTERPOL we are constantly thinking of innovative ways to help our member countries keep their citizens safer and more secure. Our organization includes 188 member countries embracing more than 7 billion people, speaking more than 7,000 different languages. Each of our countries is a sovereign with specific needs and interests that only it can decide how best to satisfy. INTERPOL strives to help our member countries do this by identifying the challenges, risks and threats in the area of security that are common to as many of our member countries as possible and to propose solutions that are cost effective, uncomplicated, flexible, and adaptable to the preferences and needs of individual member countries.

This morning I will speak to you about international migration and how the security of individual countries and the protection of migrants can be improved by putting in place a state of the art identity verification system for migrants at the national level. The goal would be for the national migrant identification system to be designed in such a way as to permit verification globally.

As INTERPOL's Secretary General, I consider the issue of the fair, just and efficient regulation of migration to be one of the most important and pressing challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The International Organization for Migration estimates the total number of international migrants at 214 million persons today, a number that could reach 405

million by 2050. The migration of people is natural and the better it can be fairly, efficiently and justly regulated...the better for us all.

Many factors inspire or compel people to migrate from one place to another. Global warming will fuel migration, in particular through its expected effects on crop yields and on the augmentation in extreme weather events. One might not realize, but already today, tens of millions of people are displaced annually due to sudden-onset of natural disasters.

War and conflict will remain a major impetus for mass migration. It is estimated that at least 90,000 people have fled Côte d'Ivoire to Liberia since the presidential election standoff and ensuing violence and unrest began last November. The ongoing conflict in Libya has also led to tens of thousands of people fleeing the country. These are but two examples, yet there are many other examples around the world.

Historically and most significantly, societal pressures and economic needs have pushed people to move across borders and this trend is likely to increase like never before. One needs only look at key indicators such as median age and economic growth to see that migration pressures will not decrease in the years to come. Entire regions of the world that have a very young population with too limited economic opportunities will push millions of young workers to find job opportunities beyond their country of origin.

In the context of a rapidly ageing population, especially in Europe, a migrant labour force will be essential for developed countries' economies. In developed countries, the migrant population of working age already makes up 13% of the working age population. Migrant workers provide crucial support services in international business centres like Hong Kong, Singapore and here in the U.A.E., where they represent more than 70% of the total population. In many countries, they perform critical functions that are no longer attractive to the local populations and also increasingly occupy highly-skilled jobs.

For less developed countries' economies, remittances reached 440 billion US dollars in 2010. These remittances are a vital inflow of capital that often make-up a significant percentage of national GDP.

In short, international migration is becoming an increasingly important phenomenon for both source and destination countries. When done legally and properly regulated, it should be thought of as a mutually beneficial phenomenon that fosters development and prosperity around the world.

But both the economic importance of migration and the fact that the number of international migrants is expected to continue to grow in the coming decades poses the critical question of how countries and the world community can properly manage 21<sup>st</sup> Century global migration in a way that enhances global security.

In addressing the challenge before us, we must be candid. The movement of migrants, and in particular workers, is still managed at the national level with very little thought being given as to how national and sovereign management can be integrated globally.

I strongly believe that we must pursue an integrated approach that respects a national sovereign's right to decide what is best for it while recognizing that a globally integrated approach will provide enhanced benefits and security at both the national and international level.

Why?

Delays and hindrances to the lawful and regulated movement of migrants internationally are often the result of legitimate and otherwise necessary security checks. Indeed, to keep their citizens safe and protect their own national security, public authorities should always check that migrants — and by all means all incoming foreign visitors — are whom they purport to be and that they do not pose a security threat.

Let me give you an example of how such an approach benefits us all.

On 18 November 1995, Germany requested INTERPOL to issue a Red “Wanted Persons” Notice for an Indian national, Mohan SINGH, wanted for murder. His whereabouts remained unknown until October 2006, 11 years later, when he presented himself under a false identity — Sucha SINGH, not Mohan SINGH — at the US Embassy in New Delhi, India, to request an entry visa for the United States.

Before issuing the visa, US authorities checked his fingerprints against INTERPOL's Fingerprints database and found that they matched those on the INTERPOL Red Notice for murder issued for Mohan SINGH 11 years earlier. The man was arrested and we were all kept safe from this wanted murderer.

This case demonstrates two important things.

First, it demonstrates the importance of systematic checks not only against the databases of the country of the migrant's birth or nationality and the destination country, but also against global databases. Mohan SINGH, an Indian national, was not wanted for crimes in India or the U.S. The alarm that the U.S. Consulate in New Delhi received about Mr. Singh was made possible because German authorities signalled the world via INTERPOL that Mr. Singh was wanted for murder and because U.S. authorities consulted global databases before deciding whether to issue a visa to Mr. Singh.

Second, it underlines the importance of border controls. We often speak of a world without borders. INTERPOL prefers to think of it as a world without fixed borders. INTERPOL believes that the concept of borders should be conceived of differently. It should include visible and invisible, fixed and mobile borders. Governments should be able to erect a border to determine the identity of a person and the validity of his or her identity documents at any place and any time.

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Dear colleagues,

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In a century when global migration has reached unseen levels and importance, and when criminals and terrorists network and strike globally, I strongly believe that there is a need for countries to put in place a system to identify migrants and verify their identity documents at the national level in a way that can be verified globally when these migrants move to other countries.

This basically means two things:

First — developing a mechanism whereby the identity features of migrants, such as names, dates of birth, fingerprints and DNA, would be systematically checked against global databases whenever migrants are being granted a residence status.

Second — developing an identity verifications system that would allow migrants to easily prove who they are and governments to verify identities and identity documents globally.

Countries should have two goals in mind: First, to make sure that anyone to whom an entry visa or migrant work permit is issued is not wanted for arrest internationally via INTERPOL and second, to ensure that his or her identity documents are valid.

I believe that one solution could be found in what I call a “Globally Verifiable Identity Card”.

Such an identity card for migrants would bring a number of significant benefits for the member countries concerned, for the migrants themselves and for global security.

For public authorities in migrants’ destination countries, it would:

- Permit the systematic check of all migrant workers against global criminal databases and therefore enhance both member country and global security.
  - Allow the electronic screening by destination countries of registered migrants when crossing borders.
  - Allow quicker intake and processing of migrant workers to whom globally verifiable ID cards already have been issued.
  - Help reduce instances of fraud and other crimes by individuals seeking entry to countries using counterfeit or fraudulent documents.
- and
- Allow greater control over migrant workers remittances by the host countries and by the migrants themselves.

For example, for the migrant worker, it would:

- Enhance international mobility through the international recognition of the card
- Reduce governmental corruption by those who would take paper identity documents from migrants and hold them until a corrupt fee is paid.
- Reduce corruption by taking away from local government and law enforcement officials the right to issue these documents at the local level without any central control.

and

- Permit the creation of a cost effective and efficient electronic-based remittance transfer system for migrants if countries decided to add such a feature to these cards. This alone would reduce corruption by 50% as stated by the World Bank's V.P. Leonard McCarthy.

Based on the foregoing, I believe that an internationally-recognized and high-security e-identity card issued at the national level for migrants by sovereign countries but verifiable globally by participating INTERPOL member countries would serve to enhance development, prosperity and security at both the national and global level.

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The challenges posed by global migration are yet another issue where we are forced to be innovative and where no solution can be found without the fruitful cooperation of public authorities and the private sector.

In the same way as for the creation of the INTERPOL Travel Document with our partners EDAPS and Entrust, the creation of a Globally Verified Identity Card for migrant workers will require adopting a comprehensive approach. We will need to bring together all stakeholders, including competent international organizations like the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization, the World Bank and INTERPOL as well as the private sector.

Indeed, developing and managing a global migrant worker identification infrastructure will require time and effort, as well as international financing. It will not be easy. But I think we simply cannot afford maintaining the current piecemeal approach to international migration. Our prosperity and security depend on it at both the national and global level.

We are fortunate that the United Emirates, ID World and its Head Sophie de la Giroday have identified the need for migration to be regulated in a fair, just and efficient manner as a significant policy matter requiring our individual and collective participation.

Later today, the Global Migration Summit will be launched. Leading thinkers on this topic internationally will provide us with their insight as to how this issue affects them nationally and internationally.

I plan on participating in these discussions, but mostly I plan to listen and learn from the speakers. My goal will be to identify innovative and cost-effective ways to

develop an infrastructure that will help better regulate the movement of migrants nationally and globally for INTERPOL member countries.

In the end, it is my hope that we will be a step closer to having identified a shared system where identification and registration of migrants can be made at the national level and verified globally in an automated way. For INTERPOL's part, we will make available our global databases and secure global communications system, based on state-of-the-art technology and data from our 188 member countries.

Let me close my remarks now, but let me rejoin you for this afternoon's session when we all will take part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a panel discussion for the official launching of the Global Migration Summit.

I wish you all a very successful conference.

Thank you.