

Opening Remarks

by President [Jackie Selebi](#)

74th General Assembly, Berlin, Germany, 19 September 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Colleagues, Good Morning

I am honoured to address this gathering of the world's police leaders as we convene the [74th INTERPOL General Assembly](#) here in Berlin, Germany. This is the first time I do so since I have taken my post as the President of INTERPOL. I consider it a rare privilege to be at the helm of this Organization.

The purpose of the General Assembly, as INTERPOL's supreme governing body, is to take major decisions that will affect global police cooperation and the role of INTERPOL in providing key services to its member countries. As I have previously said this year during the three INTERPOL Regional Conferences, it is important for us to hear what you think are important issues, what you need from the Organization, what you feel we do well, and what we should do better. Inputs from you - the Heads of NCBs and Chiefs of Police – are important and highly valued. The Organization's capability to effectively adapt to, and serve your needs and expectations, shall depend highly on the contributions you provide.

Last year, during the [73rd INTERPOL General Assembly](#) in Cancun, Mexico, we discussed the importance of global police cooperation, and the critical role of INTERPOL to the security of our respective citizens, whether they are at home or abroad. At this General Assembly here in Berlin, we will be discussing how we will further improve the synergy between INTERPOL and its National Central Bureaus in facing new security challenges in our collective fight against transnational crime and terrorism.

During the course of the General Assembly, we shall be discussing current developments and new anti-crime initiatives at INTERPOL. We shall also be talking about important regional responses to serious crimes such as trafficking of small arms and light weapons in Africa, terrorism, and cyber-crime in Asia, to name just a few.

What we have done...

Since the last INTERPOL General Assembly, many significant developments, particularly related to our three core functions, have emerged within INTERPOL.

As of today, 166 member countries are connected to the [I-24/7](#) system, with more connected weekly. We, the [Executive Committee](#) and the General Secretariat, intend to further enhance the role and status of National Central Bureaus (NCBs) within our member countries by extending the I-24/7 system connection beyond NCBs, to the police officer on the street, in the community, and at points of entry into or from member countries.

Another development is the significantly increased amount of information recorded in our databases that our police officers in the field can use while performing their daily operational tasks.

Closer interaction and collaboration from our member countries situated in the four INTERPOL regions has resulted in increased relevance and dynamism within INTERPOL. INTERPOL success stories demonstrate the critical roles our different NCBs play in global police cooperation. For instance, a Serbian national, Milan Lukic, wanted by the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Serbia and Montenegro, for war crimes against Bosnian Muslims in 1992-94, was arrested in Buenos

Aires last August 7, 2005. This could not have been possible without the close collaboration between ICTY, the INTERPOL General Secretariat, and the NCBs in Argentina and Chile. The true identity of Mr. Lukic, who was using a false name when accosted by the Argentinian authorities, was confirmed when his fingerprints were sent by NCB Buenos Aires to IPSP for immediate comparison and confirmation. This success story clearly demonstrates that our NCBs play a very key operational role in global police cooperation, and utilizing them to their fullest potential will make a difference in our fight against transnational crime and terrorism.

We have entered a new phase in our partnership with the [United Nations](#) against terrorism and other forms of serious transnational crime. With the agreement of UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan, and the full support of INTERPOL's Executive Committee, we now have an INTERPOL Office at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The establishment of INTERPOL's Representative's Office was the result of intensive consultation between INTERPOL and the United Nations, and demonstrated the willingness of both Organizations to combine efforts in making the world a safer place.

As you know, INTERPOL was highly involved in the [Tsunami](#) Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) efforts. INTERPOL's assistance to the Tsunami-affected areas is an example of effective collaboration among various countries and organizations. This collaboration enabled us to face collectively the unprecedented challenges brought on by the disaster, particularly in the identification of victims. In addition to passing on our experience in DVI protocols and committing staff in varying capacities and roles to support the operations in the stricken region, INTERPOL gained valuable knowledge and experience that will be useful in dealing with future disaster incidents.

I have briefly presented INTERPOL's major developments and achievements. They will be presented to you in more detail by my colleagues during the course of the General Assembly.

Issues to discuss during the General Assembly

Before we start addressing the issues laid out in the agenda before us, I wish to seek the General Assembly's guidance on three important issues.

The first issue concerns a request from the Israeli NCB, which seeks to change its regional affiliation to become part of the European Region.

Secondly, Iran and Argentina are in disagreement over the request made by NCB Buenos Aires of 12 [Red Notices](#) against Iranian nationals for their alleged participation in the planning of the 18 July 1994 bombing in Buenos Aires.

The Executive Committee has been dealing with these two issues during a number of sessions, without however being able to devise a solution that could be considered satisfactory to all parties. In light of this situation, we have therefore decided to ask the General Assembly, as INTERPOL's supreme decision making body, to discuss these items. Consequently, two points will be added to the General Assembly's agenda: 'Request of Israel to change its regional affiliation' and 'Matter of 12 Red Notices requested by Argentina concerning Iranian nationals'.

Finally during its February session, the Executive Committee discussed an item that it wishes to pursue further. On Thursday, as you know, we will have elections for a number of posts to the Executive Committee. The importance of having able, experienced and committed police officials taking up this responsibility can hardly be overstated. Of course, once a person has been elected for the Executive Committee, his or her situation may change and this might prevent regular attendance to the Executive Committee session, thus making it impossible to carry out this task effectively. I am convinced you all see the need to have a present and active Executive Committee to serve the Organization in the best possible manner. Therefore, I would like to ask the General Assembly to considering tasking the Executive Committee with devising a procedure to ensure that, if such a situation arises, it can be dealt in an appropriate manner.

The need to pursue our drive...

Before I end my remarks, let me say a few words about [Secretary General Noble](#). I, and probably many of you, know him as a tireless worker, leader, and a visionary who is deeply committed to the goals of INTERPOL. Much of what INTERPOL has achieved in recent years is due to his outstanding leadership, enabling our Organization to make its vision a reality.

We all know the advantages of having momentum, and the critical importance of sustaining, if not pushing forward, the developments of INTERPOL against crime and terrorism. We have somebody in Ron Noble who has proven his capability to handle the enormous task of leading the day-to-day operations of the INTERPOL General Secretariat and at the same time raising the International community's awareness of INTERPOL.

The Executive Committee is confident that Mr. Noble is the best person to continue to lead our Organization in the next five years. Having him lead this body for another 5 years will allow us to continuously enhance programs and projects that are currently in place, and to develop new initiatives that would propel INTERPOL to much further heights in advancing global police cooperation. Let us therefore keep the momentum going. We strongly believe that the INTERPOL community will greatly benefit from Mr. Noble's re-appointment as our Secretary-General.

By the end of the 74th General Assembly, my colleagues Ms Mireille Ballestrazzi from France, Mr Juris Jasinkevics from Latvia, Mr Mohamed Ibrahim Mohamed from Egypt and Mr Genaro Garcia Luna from Mexico will have completed their terms on the Executive Committee. I would like to take this occasion to pay tribute to and thank them for the work that they have accomplished over the last few years, always guided by one basic principle: **to serve the interests of the Organization**.

In their eagerness to serve these interests, they have always displayed a thorough knowledge of national and international police issues and have made every effort to develop new ideas which, in one way or another, have contributed promoting and enhancing international police co-operation.

They have taught me a great deal and given me a fine example. I am most grateful to them all and they have my most sincere admiration

Closing commitment...

To conclude, allow me to express my gratitude to our German hosts today. I know that hosting an INTERPOL General Assembly is not an easy exercise. It requires preparation, dedication, and a lot of hard work. To our German colleagues, on behalf of the INTERPOL community, we thank you very much.

It is my utmost commitment that during my term as INTERPOL President, with the strong support of the Executive Committee members and the Secretary-General, INTERPOL will give priority to the needs of our member countries so that together we can effectively face the new security challenges in our fight against transnational crime and [terrorism](#). I consider it my responsibility as the President of INTERPOL to ensure that all of INTERPOL's activities are pertinent and appropriate for each and every member country.

I would also like to thank you all for your strong and active support for all INTERPOL programs and activities during my first-year of office as INTERPOL President.

Thank you and good day.