



## MINISTERIAL MEETING - PANEL #3.5 - IRELAND

**Address by Ms Frances Fitzgerald TD**

**Minister for Justice and Equality**

**83<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of Interpol**

### **Panel 3:- A Century of Collectively Combatting Transnational Crime**

Mr Chairperson, distinguished guests, colleagues, delegates.

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to address you today.

I would also like to congratulate Secretary General Noble and his staff on organising the 83<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly here in Monaco. During its 100 years of history, Interpol has stood the test of time and continues to be a critical element in the constant fight against international and transnational criminal activity. In today's modern world, where borders are almost invisible to modern technology, its role is ever more important.

In the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there are some who, regrettably, seek to exploit developments which are aimed at increasing trade and the free movement of people. Criminal activities such as the exploitation of women and children, human trafficking and drug smuggling continue to undermine international measures to improve the quality of life worldwide.

Ireland is not immune from these criminal activities. Our proximity to mainland Europe coupled with our exposure to the Atlantic seaboard provide possibilities which global criminal elements seek to maximise to their own selfish advantage and to the disadvantage of many others.

Through the networks and cooperation established and underpinned by organisations such as Interpol, Ireland has had significant successes in targeting those engaged in such activities and in particular in targeting the assets of those who have engaged in these activities. I would like to cite some examples of successes in this area.

- As part of Operation Infra-red – an Interpol operation focussed on locating certain serious long-term international fugitives - a Dutch national wanted for murder in Belgium was the subject of an INTERPOL Red Notice which received publicity across the world. This person was arrested by police in Croatia in June 2012 following a tip-off from a member of the public in Ireland.



- Almost €80m worth of cocaine was seized off the south west coast of Ireland last September. This is one of the many significant drugs seizures that have been made in Irish waters in recent years. A significant factor in these successful multi-agency operations has been the quality and robustness of cooperation mechanisms, notably the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) based in Lisbon and through which drug traffickers are pro-actively targeted. By conducting such operations this European law enforcement centre in which Ireland actively participates directly with 6 other partner EU Member States and with international support serves the broader EU and global community in suppressing drug trafficking.
- In another Interpol led operation - Operation VICO – a paedophile was caught in Bangkok after a public global manhunt. I am delighted to acknowledge here today the assistance provided in this operation by Detective Sergeant Michael Moran who at the time was Ireland's seconded officer with Interpol and who is now Assistant Director, Human Trafficking & Child Exploitation Division at Interpol.
- The Criminal Assets Bureau, which was established in Ireland in 1996, uses a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary partnership approach in its investigations into the suspected proceeds of criminal conduct. It works closely with international crime investigation agencies, and has successfully targeted proceeds of international criminality. As an Asset Recovery Office, the Bureau now has dozens of direct counterpart offices across the world.
- In another good example of Police cooperation using the Interpol channels, a man was under investigation by the Garda Síochána for his suspected involvement in the recovery of bomb components in September 2013. He was arrested in Dublin and his fingerprints were circulated globally. This man is currently before the courts in Ireland.
- There are daily interactions between our National Central Bureau which support the ongoing work of Interpol not just in the field of criminal activity but also in the area of humanitarian work such as disaster victim identification.

I would like to congratulate INTERPOL and all its staff and seconded officers on their success in developing the links that help to combat transnational criminal activity. Thanks to the excellent cooperation which you have fostered and of which these case studies are but a small sample, police men and women in Ireland and all over the world have provided invaluable assistance to individual people.

Many thousands of victims of crime have received assistance and have been freed from their ordeals.

There are people alive today thanks to your efforts.

There are women freed from trafficking today thanks to your efforts.

There are children free from abuse today thanks to your efforts



I recently attended the Second Ministerial Conference of the Global Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Online. The capacity of those engaged in child sexual abuse to hide their tracks to avoid detection must never be underestimated.

We must never cease to pursue those engaged in this type of heinous criminal activity.

We must never forget that each of those victims is a sister, a brother, a son or a daughter.

Interpol as an organisation and individual police officers around the world can rightly be proud of your work in this area.

Mr Chairman, I have noted the text of the draft declaration and I am fully supportive of its sentiments and objectives. In conclusion I would like to congratulate Ron Noble for the leadership and guidance he has shown during his terms of office. I would like to re-iterate our commitment to his successor and to Interpol itself of the fullest possible level of co-operation in the fight against all forms of transnational crime. In particular I recommend the greatest possible level of co-operation between the police, revenue and social security agencies of each state at the national and international level. Our experience with the Criminal Assets Bureau shows that when these agencies work together, those engaged in criminal activity can be properly tackled and brought to justice.

Mr Chairman, delegates, thank you once again for your attention.