

**Keynote  
for the  
Interpol General Assembly in Monaco,  
4 November 2014**

**Panel 2 “Empowering Police Cooperation through Laws, Policies,  
Technologies, and Techniques”**

***Interpol’s International Child Sexual Exploitation Database***

President Ballestrazzi,

Secretary General,

Delegates,

Colleagues!

Over the past 100 years the international cooperation of our police forces has become ever closer, and increasingly interconnected and fast-moving.

For good reasons: Globalization and digitalisation have changed crime as such.

More than ever before, offenders operate internationally and across borders, using information technology and, above all, the Internet.

A particularly odious crime illustrating this fact is the sexual abuse of children and adolescents.

The growth of the Internet has led to a massive increase in the amount of available child abuse material. Worldwide access makes its distribution easier. The Internet offers anonymity, including the anonymity of electronic payment.

Over 20 years ago, Interpol set up a special directorate to combat crime against children and adolescents. Its main tasks include the analysis of images and video recordings to identify the victims of sexual abuse, and their abusers. One of the main problems is that the places of crime are hard to identify.

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In 2001 Interpol began to compare new images with available material to identify places of crime or the whereabouts of victims, to find suspects and protect victims from further harassment.

This was a major success and led to the establishment of a uniform and centralized database with direct access for all member countries.

Today, Interpol's *International Child Sexual Exploitation Database* (ICSE) enables all member countries to run queries and enter information directly. At present, over 50 states are connected via the I-24/7 Interpol network.

Interpol promotes the extension and use of the ICSE database: For instance, its special unit, the Crimes Against Children Unit, processes the data to be matched, and ICPO helps member countries to set up their own special units.

Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office, the BKA, has systematically collected sexual abuse material for a long time and examined it for investigative clues to help identify offenders. The BKA cooperates closely with the Interpol Secretariat-General and other special units worldwide.

The BKA helped develop the ICSE database from the first stages on, participated in the trial operation and has used it intensively ever since its rollout. In addition, a BKA officer was certified as database trainer this summer and assists Interpol in carrying out training courses.

To be clear: The ICSE database is essential for any BKA cases involving sexual abuse material.

It provides real-time responses to queries, allowing users to establish whether they are dealing with new, known or maybe even identified material. This helps avoid duplicating efforts. The overall assessment shows that the systematic collection and comparison of material provides valuable clues for investigations.

The material is stored in a database with relevant case data and additional information and is immediately available for queries posed by other member countries.

The added value of the ICSE database has been growing constantly with the rising number of participating countries and active users.

Let me give you some figures to illustrate its success: Up to and including 2013, more than 3,000 victims from 40 countries and 1,900 suspects were identified. The ICSE database is the international hub for sharing and comparing data associated with the fight against the sexual abuse of children and adolescents.

Ladies and gentlemen, what can we learn from Interpol's International Child Sexual Exploitation Database for international cooperation in the fight against crime?

As more and more crimes are committed internationally and via the Internet, sharing information across borders and ensuring coordinated action is essential.

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There is a huge demand for forensic expertise and technical equipment.

Interpol should take the lead here, given that it forms a network of 190 member countries and is able to adjust quickly to new developments.

The organization should establish and expand modern and secure communication channels and databases also in the future to live up to its role as the global information hub for police forces.

If Interpol intends to assist investigations in the member countries even more than to date, the improvement of data quality plays a decisive role.

Recent developments such as the new *Interpol Global Complex for Innovation* (IGCI) in Singapore show that Interpol is well prepared to support the international fight against crime, for example in the field of cyber crime, and to initiate corresponding processes in member countries.

Continuing to gear Interpol to the digital age is also at *the core* of the vision outlined by Jürgen Stock – the German candidate Interpol's Executive Committee nominated for the post of Secretary-General. Mr Stock, I wish you every success in your new office. I am fully convinced that under your lead Interpol will remain *the* hub for international cooperation of criminal police forces.

Thank you very much for your attention!