

Govor generalnega sekretarja Interpola Ronald K. Noble

Dear colleagues, good morning.

It is my pleasure to be here with you in this truly magnificent region of Bohinj.

Before I start, I would like to extend my gratitude to Slovenian authorities for organizing this meeting and for their warm and friendly hospitality.

Indeed, this place is truly a godly place, as its name rightly suggests, one that has inspired Slovenia's greatest romantic poet. I am sure that it will inspire our work over the next two days and, of course, our celebrating of Slovenia's 20th anniversary as a member of INTERPOL.

I don't know if Slovenia's strive for innovation comes from its inspiring spectacular landscape, but the country, throughout its twenty years as a member of INTERPOL, has repeatedly been a leader and an example to follow.

Back in 2008, for example, when the country was holding the European Union Presidency, Slovenia was instrumental in organizing and instituting high-level joint meetings between the EU Council and INTERPOL.

These high-level meetings, initially called Troika-INTERPOL meetings and now COSI-CATS-INTERPOL meetings — have played — and still play — a critical role in strengthening cooperation between INTERPOL and the European Union.

One concrete result was the recognition of INTERPOL as a central player for security in Europe within the EU's Stockholm Programme.

This allowed INTERPOL and the European Union to launch several joint projects in areas including maritime piracy, border security, small arms, stolen works of art, and environmental crime, to name only a few.

In 2009 also, Slovenia successfully integrated INTERPOL's criminal databases into its national criminal database system, thus making information shared by police all around the world immediately available to frontline officers throughout the country.

This initiative by Slovenian authorities resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of checks on INTERPOL's databases, and thus in the number of positive hits.

Just to give you an idea of the magnitude of the change, consider that Slovenia was making just above one thousand searches on INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Document database back in 2008. In 2011, Slovenian authorities made 8 million checks on INTERPOL's SLTD database, generating more than 500 positive identifications.

Similarly, checks on INTERPOL's Stolen Motor Vehicle database went from approximately 8,000 in 2008 to 1.1 million in 2011, generating almost 1,800 hits. Checks on persons went from less than 4,000 to more than 13 million, generating almost 5,000 hits.

Considering the size of the country, I personally find these figures very impressive.

Needless to say, by taking this initiative, Slovenia boosted the security of its citizens, but also enhanced the security of citizens of the Schengen area, the European region at large, and indeed the entire world.

I take this opportunity to commend Slovenian authorities their vision and commitment to international police cooperation.

With these successes in mind, there was no doubt that, chaired by our Slovenian colleague Borut SELAN, INTERPOL's European Committee would be in good hands.

One major achievement under Slovenian chairmanship was of course the fact that Europe has become the first INTERPOL region to develop its own regional strategy.

This strategy, that you will be discussing and reviewing over the next two days, truly embodies INTERPOL's vision: by promoting cooperation among institutions, information sharing, compatibility and interoperability, the strategy indeed works towards 'Connecting police for a safer world'.

During the last few years, cooperation with the European Union has reached new levels, a reinforced partnership symbolised by the presence of EU Commissioner Cecilia Malmström at the last INTERPOL Heads of NCBs Conference.

Just a couple of weeks ago again, INTERPOL and the European Union have launched a new project. Project WAPIS — for West African Police Information System — will see INTERPOL developing a centralized regional criminal database system for countries in the West African region.

This EU-funded project will enable West African countries to boost their cooperation and efforts against transnational crimes such as drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings, which affect both the West African and the European regions. It will also enhance information sharing between Western African countries and Europe.

As such, this project highlights another important goal of the INTERPOL strategy for the European region: to make INTERPOL Europe's gateway to the rest of the world.

This is true for European Union member countries, but of course also for all the other countries of the European region, including the Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association countries and Commonwealth of Independent States, with whom cooperation has also grown significantly.

In times of economic constraints, the European strategy also promotes the efficient use of resources among institutions. This is exactly what INTERPOL and Europol are doing in pooling our respective strengths in fighting maritime piracy — taking advantage of INTERPOL's global reach and of Europol's analytical capability. This will also be the case when the European Cybercrime Centre and INTERPOL's Global Complex for Innovation will begin operating in The Hague and Singapore.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to commend all of you for your dedication to international police cooperation. Your efforts are bearing fruit.

Let me conclude by congratulating Slovenia for its 20th anniversary as a member of the INTERPOL family.

Thank you very much.