

32nd Annual Meeting of the INTERPOL Specialist Group on Crimes Against Children

Fairmont Southampton

Bermuda

30th September 2014

It appears that this is a year of milestones. This is the 32nd meeting of the INTERPOL Specialist Group on Crimes Against Children. Slightly older is INTERPOL itself, celebrating 100 years of international policing cooperation. The Bermuda Police Service, likewise, celebrates 135 years of policing with the community this year.

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to host this important, international event, particularly as we are one of the smaller jurisdictions represented here today. And I am particularly grateful to the Bermuda Government for lending its support to the Bermuda Police Service and enabling us to provide part sponsorship. The BPS relationship with INTERPOL spans decades, and recent examples of our engagement include: Operation Lionfish – an INTERPOL-led operation targeting maritime trafficking of drugs and firearms by organized crime groups across Central America and the Caribbean; sexual assault and other investigations onboard Bermuda-registered cruise ships in international waters; RED NOTICES that have led to the capture of a murder suspect in the US and his successful extradition to Bermuda, and a new investigation that is only days old and involves ATM skimmers, a first for Bermuda. Our investigators already have been connected through INTERPOL to other Caribbean law enforcement agencies who have uncovered similar activity and lines of enquiry are opening up. And those are only the cases that we can talk about openly.

Bermuda is the poster child for the platitude that, “the world is growing smaller.” Not because we are such a tiny Island, but because the development of new technologies which link us together reduces distance between us and makes the world smaller, more connected. And in the examples I just gave, Bermuda connected with the law enforcement communities in countries like France, Singapore and Japan as if they were next door. So if law enforcement can figure out the benefits of internet communications, just imagine what the criminally-minded can dream up. Think about how criminals are making the world smaller through the use of technology and connecting with each other to enjoy economies of scale, wider distribution markets, greater access, more supply streams and avoiding detection.

Crimes against children are examples of all of these. These tend to be local crimes with many being committed in the home or within the family. But there are a number of areas where there is an international component, including internet crimes of distributing child abuse material, direct contact and abuse of children through social networking sites, travelling sex offenders and child trafficking. This means that Law Enforcement Officers have to act locally, but think globally. Today’s criminals do not respect neat and linear country boundaries within which to operate. Nor are they opposed to the concept of international cooperation. The law enforcement community must expand its thinking beyond role and territory. Starting at home with sister agencies and sharing information and resources, the effort must then extend to the region where communications networks are established to transmit timely information to the people that need it, and then

everything must plug into the global effort of identifying international trends, tracking the most wanted wherever they may try to hide, and preventing crimes against children before they happen.

But law enforcement isn't enough. No country can arrest its way out of this problem, or any other crime problem. Strong child protection legislation must give children the voice they don't have for themselves and it must deny the criminal use of legitimate communications technology.

But legislation isn't enough, either. No country can legislate itself out of this problem, or any other social problem. The key lies in finding ways to make potential victims less likely to be victimized, and to make offenders less likely to offend. Legislation and prosecution must be part of a larger strategy that combines enforcement with prevention and rehabilitation.

These crimes represent a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies around the world. They require highly specialised skills and expensive training and equipment to tackle. The strength of this Specialist Group on Crimes Against Children is that you have the combined wisdom of 183 delegates representing 35 countries. You have enough brain power in this room to solve global warming.

So I invite everyone here over the next few days to use this opportunity to continue the joined up work that has been a feature of these meetings for many years. International cooperation and the development of effective counter measures are the keys to our success. Each of us should strive to accomplish three things at least while we're here:

Firstly, put faces to names. There is no better aid to effective communications than a personal relationship with the person on the other end of the phone. For some of you, like Jimmy, you've been around for a long time and you know everyone. For others, this is an opportunity to make new friends.

Secondly, listen - and borrow with pride. There is no need to re-invent the wheel in this business, especially when criminal finances are seemingly endless, and police budgets are woefully finite. If you hear an idea about something that might work at home – borrow it, modify it, take it home and practise it.

Thirdly, in order for others to listen, you must share your ideas. Even when it seems really obvious, you never know who in the room hasn't thought of that idea yet. Don't be afraid to speak up, and you just might save someone hours of paperwork.

So: Meet, listen, share.

And if there's any time left – please enjoy the beauty of our Island home. I understand that this meeting has never been held in the Caribbean or North America before. I'm afraid to tell you that you will come to regret the decision to come to Bermuda first. You will wish you had started at the other end, and worked your way UP! Despite our shortcomings and our own law enforcement challenges, Bermuda has much to offer and much to give. Bermuda is, indeed, another world and our people are our treasure. I hope you will enjoy our hospitality. Welcome to our home.

Thank you.