



Opening Address

by

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6th INTERPOL/StAR Global Focal Points Conference on Asset Recovery

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New Delhi, India

Your Excellency, Prime Minister of India Mr Narendra Modi,
Honourable Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions,
Central Vigilance Commissioner,
National Security Advisor,
Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation,
INTERPOL Executive Committee Delegate for Asia,
United States' Ambassador to India,
Country Director of The World Bank, as representative of the World Bank-UNODC StAR
initiative,
Distinguished participants from our INTERPOL member countries and representatives from
international organizations and partner establishments,
Dear guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Deviyon Aur Sajjano,
Good morning.
Namaste.

In the ancient Indian philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, as stated by the Honourable Prime Minister at the United Nations General Assembly, rests the idea of viewing the world as one family.

Now, more than ever, this one family must stand united in its efforts to prevent the repetition of what happened – against humanity – in Paris last Friday; or in Beirut and Ankara recently; or in Mumbai in 2008.

To help keep this family safe, a simple yet powerful idea was born around a 100 years ago: to connect police forces across borders; across different cultures; across different political views; across the world. This, Your Excellency, Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, was and is, the living idea of INTERPOL.

And here today, as INTERPOL's Secretary General, it is with a deep sense of honour that I address such a distinguished audience assembled in New Delhi, the majestic capital of India.

This conference organized among CBI, INTERPOL and the World Bank – UNODC StAR (Stolen Asset Recovery) Initiative, focuses on a key concern for law enforcement across all regions and continents today.

Asset Recovery – which is an intrinsic part of the global fight against Corruption and Financial Crimes – has become increasingly challenging in the 21st century, where just the click of buttons can lead to huge illicit flows across borders instantly.

As proceeds of corruption cross borders, trust in leaders and public service could be undermined; criminal activity facilitated; and the perception of impunity created.

On the contrary, the moment those proceeds return to the rightful jurisdiction that saw them stolen, justice will be achieved, and closure will be reached.

It is no surprise then, that the 6th Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption has once again put this very issue high on its agenda.

And just over a month ago, world leaders reached an agreement on a new set of Sustainable Development Goals which included the objectives of strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets, curbing illicit financial flows and combating all forms of corruption and organized crime by 2030.

Indeed, corruption and its gains today are interconnected globally in a way that requires a collective response from law enforcement agencies, strongly backed by the sincere political will of Governments and Global Leaders.

Connected worldwide to provide a secure, neutral platform for information exchange, StAR-INTERPOL Global Focal Points Network by now includes over 200 investigators and prosecutors from 120 countries. INTERPOL and StAR have a dedicated programme for the areas of anti-corruption, financial crimes, and asset recovery.

Yet, there is much more needed to be done. INTERPOL recognizes this, and therefore strives to constantly upgrade its policing capabilities using innovation: an approach that India is extremely familiar with.

Many would have heard of the Red Notice from INTERPOL's colour-coded Notices System. Similarly, the creation of a new Notice has been endorsed by our global membership for the tracing and recovery of assets from criminal activities. This is the INTERPOL Silver Notice, and it will be entering a pilot test phase soon, for assessing its effectiveness.

The trails of financial crimes often reveal the interconnectedness between crimes of different types, stemming from different parts of the world, often with complex modi operandi at play.

India and its police agencies undoubtedly have a vast experience in dealing with threats posed by transnational crimes. Its police personnel have also often been part of UN Peacekeeping Missions in some of the world's most hostile environments.

Such experiences at the national level must be shared over a neutral platform between nations – as much as should police information on crimes and criminals – in a secure, timely manner, cutting across crime areas and regions.

This holds true whether for countering terrorism and extremism, organized crime, or cybercrime.

It also holds true for countries in Africa fighting Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab, or those in Central Asia struggling to contain the trafficking in drugs, or those facing the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters worldwide; to cite examples.

In the face of such complex global threats, international police cooperation continues to facilitate the exchange of law enforcement information, skills and experiences across all regions.

This is what INTERPOL has striven to do for almost a century; during which we have also witnessed outstanding cooperation with India, since it became an INTERPOL member country in 1949. I must thank the CBI for their efforts in nurturing this relationship over so many years.

Based on such strong associations with our member countries, and a strong resolve, INTERPOL continues to strive at preventing what happened in Paris; or in Mumbai.

Because a globally united, strong response must be sustained; even in the wake of economic challenges faced by many parts of the world, severely limiting resources for law enforcement.

In conclusion therefore, Your Excellency Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen – let me state that INTERPOL will strive to do what is necessary, to meet the needs of its member countries, such as supporting cross-border initiatives in the realm of Asset Recovery.

In doing so, when obstacles come in its way, INTERPOL will remind itself of the “world as one family”, that it is also a part of.

It will look back at the difficulties it overcame in the past; but will look ahead for a future where visionary global leadership of the new century – would support the cause of international police cooperation.

Once again, it has been an honour to have been granted this opportunity. May I also thank the Indian authorities for their excellent hospitality, and the CBI under Director Sinha’s leadership, for the professionalism shown towards organizing this event here in New Delhi.

I wish you all a very successful conference ahead.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Bahaut Bahaut Dhanyavaad.