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ROLE OF ICPO-INTERPOL: CONNECTING POLICE FORCES FOR A SAFER WORLD

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Introduction:

The International Criminal Police Organisation, or better known as the 'INTERPOL' to many, is an inter-governmental organization, consisting of 194 member nations, whose basic objective is to assist police forces throughout the globe, to help create a safer environment for the public. This is achieved by sharing of data and allowing access to accumulate information of crimes and criminals that is provided through the wide range of technical and operational support made available by the Organisation.¹ The main headquarters of the INTERPOL is stationed in Lyon, France, and has numerous other satellite offices throughout different regions of the world, like the 'INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation' (IGCI) in Singapore. The INTERPOL functions in four official languages, i.e., Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The General Assembly is the governing body that meets at least once a year, to take certain decisions regarding the institution and its functioning. This paper focuses on analysing the development of the Organisation, its purposes, significant contributions and lastly, its shortcomings.

The first International Criminal Police Congress, held from 14th to 18th of April, 1914, in Monaco, was where the initial idea of the INTERPOL was thought of. A cooperative system was discussed upon that would assist the initial 24 countries to solve crimes, identify techniques and carry out extradition.² The General Assembly adopted the Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL in Vienna, in 1956, at its 25th session.³

Constitution of the Organisation:

¹ What is INTERPOL, available at: <https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/What-is-INTERPOL#> (Last visited on October 2, 2020).

² Key dates, available at: <https://www.interpol.int/en/Who-we-are/Our-history/Key-dates> (Last visited on October 1, 2020)

³ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL

The General Secretariat is responsible for day-to-day activities and operations of the agency. It happens to be run by the Secretary General. Both police officials and civilians make up the staffing population of the INTERPOL. Request for membership to the organization has to be submitted to the Secretary General, by the respective States' Government, which is subject to approval by two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.⁴

The structure of the Organisation comprises of numerous authorities, namely;

- The General Assembly,
- The Executive Committee,
- The General Secretariat,
- The National Central Bureaus,
- The Advisers, and,
- The Commission of the Control Files.⁵

The officials employed belong to a wide range of field that they are associated to, in order to meet the requirements of the Organisation, in helping to achieve their objectives. Official personnel are trained extensively to ensure efficient functioning with the services offered.

While representing a Member, it is generally advised that a competent and suitable delegate be appointed by the states, preferably someone who deals with police affairs in the usual course of their business.⁶

The composition of the Executive Committee consists of the President of the Organization, along with three Vice-Presidents and nine Delegates. It is a must that all of these thirteen members of the executive committee belong to separate countries, in order to balance the weight and scope of equal geographical representation.⁷ It becomes the job of the President to be in direct contact with the Secretary General to ensure that activities carried out by the Executive Committee are in conformity with the decisions taken by the General Assembly.⁸ However, it is extremely

⁴ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL, Art. 4

⁵ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Art. 5

⁶ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Art. 7

⁷ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Article 15

⁸ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Article 18

important to note that the members of the Executive Committee are addressed as representatives of the Organisation, rather than representatives of their Member States.⁹

What purpose does it serve:

The motto that the INTERPOL adopts is ‘*Connecting police forces for a safer place*’, also serves the dual purpose of also indicating the primary objective of the Organisation. A specialized communication system, developed for exclusive exercise of the agency, known as I-24/7, is the medium through which it is able to connect all the nations. It is an extremely secure network that allows countries not only to interact with the General Secretariat, but also to come in contact with each other, for a more fluid interaction. This is available in order to help locate fugitives from around the world and assist police forces in the maximum capacity possible, to maintain peace and order.

The database that the INTERPOL possesses is also accessible to the Member States, and may opt for other services provided by the organization in real time, from both central and remote locations.¹⁰ The Organisation currently has access to 18 police databases that provides intel on crimes and criminals, ranging from personal details like fingerprints to background history of individuals. According to the 2019 Annual Report, their database was reported to have contained more than 100 million police files, that were consulted approximately 230 times every second, on average.¹¹ The INTERPOL also offers several investigative support systems that range from advanced forensics and analysis, to fugitive reports, to field operations, to training and networking, for a more elusive understanding of crime trends.

Article 2 of the Constitution of the ICPO-INTERPOL provides for the aims of the institution. It describes an Organisation that promotes the widest possible mutual assistance between police forces, in separate countries, all in line with the spirit of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.¹² It furthers aims to develop Institutions that are highly likely to effectively contribute to suppression of any ordinary law crimes.¹³

How INTERPOL is regulated worldwide

⁹ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Article 21

¹⁰ *Supra* note 1 at 2

¹¹ INTERPOL-Annual Report 2019

¹² Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Art. 2(1)

¹³ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Art. 2(2)

Each of the member countries has a central point that is in touch with the General Secretariat, known as the 'INTERPOL National Central Bureau' (NCB). NCBs around the world are also interconnected to each other, through channels extended by the INTERPOL. An NCB, however, is run by the national police forces of their respective countries. The Organisation also operates seven regional offices throughout the world, namely, in Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Kenya, Thailand and a representative office at the African Union in Addis Ababa, the European Union in Brussels and United Nations in New York and the UNDOC in Vienna.¹⁴

One of the many advantages that the INTERPOL provides is the fact that it even enables countries that may not have any diplomatic ties or relations, to work in tandem with each other, and directly work with such counterparts, in moments of necessity. However, since it is an International Organisation, it is bound to remain politically neutral and be regulated within national existing laws of each country. The Organisation is strictly prohibited to intervene in activities of any political, military, religious or racial origin, that may persist in a state.¹⁵ A 'Command and Coordination Centre', commonly known as the 'CCC', is responsible for dispensing 24-hour support to Member Nations.

Areas of interest:

The INTERPOL concentrates its focus and resources targeting on mainly three branches of crimes that it considers the most pressing in today's world, namely;

Counter-terrorism; the Organisation assists countries in disrupting terrorist activities by providing aid to identify dangerous individuals, their network and affiliates that may be associated to such activities, by ensuring restrictions on travel and mobility, weapon and finance acquisition, etc.,

Cybercrime; Prevention of any sort of cyberattacks, to ensure that the internet remains a safe place for the public, and,

Organized crime and emerging crimes; as the name suggests, its primary objective is to disrupt criminal networks, to identify, analyse and respond to criminal threats.

Funding of the INTERPOL

The budget and resources that the Organisation requires to function is mainly achieved from financial contributions made by Member states, in the form of gifts, bequests, subsidies, grants,

¹⁴ INTERPOL FACT SHEET

¹⁵ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Art..3

etc., after receiving approval from the Executive Committee.¹⁶ The total budget for the Organisation in 2019 was approximately 139 million Euros.

Advanced technology at the disposal of the Organisation and initiatives adopted¹⁷

The INTERPOL happens to be one of most well-funded and heavily equipped International Organisation. This means that it also has a significant role in acquiring the most recent technology available to help assist police forces do their jobs more efficiently. Some of its state of the art technology consists of the I-24/7 secure network, which is extended to 172 member countries, providing real time access to their database, the FIND technology, which was implemented to 12 new countries in 2019, including the Maldives that was responsible in connecting three airports and four seaports, and FIJI in the South Pacific. This technology is integrated into national systems or border management systems of the respective countries, providing direct access to the Organisation database from the very frontline. Apart from these, eleven new countries were also reported to have adopted the WISDM technology, which automatically updates the database of stolen or lost travel documents and vehicles.

Some of the other technological areas of advancement that were reached was the availability of the 'drug analysis database', which was the 18th and most recent addition. Better known as the 'Relief database', it was donated by the Czech Republic. Only available to a handful of experts prior to this, it provides law enforcement agencies with advanced and sophisticated techniques for drug analysis. It is often helpful in drawing connections between shipments of compressed drugs and interception of delivery networks, by processes involving tool-mark comparison, logos and chemical composition of drugs.

'Roxanne', a project funded by the European Union, was launched in September of 2019, brought together private as well as public shareholders to help cultivate avenues related to speech and facial recognition and network analysis, that would result in boosting the capabilities of the Organisation.

A country may request the INTERPOL for assistance to help national security forces during times of any large-scale programs that may take place within its territory, which could be a political or sporting event, for example. The INTERPOL Major Events Support Teams (IMESTs) are deployed for serving such purposes. The aim of such support teams is to carry out

¹⁶ Constitution of ICPO-INTERPOL Art. 38

¹⁷ INTERPOL ANNUAL REPORT 2019

border and other checks, so as to cope with any lingering danger that may be cast out around these events, in the form of terrorism or organized crime.

The Organisation issues two kinds of notices for fugitives that they are currently in pursuit of. These notices are colour coded, to distinguish between the crimes that the fugitives are being accused of. They are classified into ‘Red notices’, for persons that are wanted for prosecution to serve a sentence, and ‘Yellow notices’, for persons that are wanted for any environmental crimes that may be committed. A total of 13,377 red notices were issued during the course of last year, that took the total value of notices existing at the time to 62,448, and 3,165 yellow notices were issued, that brought the tally upto 12,234 notices that were valid.

*Significant Operations carried out by INTERPOL*¹⁸

Counter terrorism

An Incident Report Team (IRT) was deployed by the Organisation to help investigate the recent bombings and terror attacks that took place at churches and hotels in Sri Lanka.

Operation Neptune II, was a multi-agency operation, that was carried out to intercept suspicious persons that were crossing maritime routes between North Africa and Southern Europe, without proper documentation, hoping to pass unnoticed. Random searches at seven seaports were carried out, which resulted in detection of 16 foreign terrorist fighters. Another such operation was carried out to breakdown a smuggling racket between routes from USA and Canada, that resulted in 53 arrests and identification of 775 migrants from 30 different countries.

One of the most significant contributions that INTERPOL made during the course of last year was its involvement in an operation famously known as ‘Operation Blackwrist’. It was a two year long international crackdown aimed at protecting vulnerable communities. It helped identify cases on mass child abuse that were carried out in Thailand, Australia and the United States.

Over 50 children were rescued during this operation and nine child sex offenders were arrested.

INTERPOL also made an effort to track eight fugitives that were wanted for crimes against women in 2019, and joined global forces in an attempt to curb this heinous crime that is still very much persistent throughout the world. It was an effort to address the fact that 71% of human trafficking victims worldwide were women and girls, and 3 out of 4 of them were sexually exploited. Similar attempts were made to curb human trafficking activities under Operation Epervier, in Nigeria, where 220 victims were rescued.

¹⁸ INTERPOL ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Cyberspace crimes

These crimes range from virus attacks on computers to crimes committed on the internet to corruption of information systems. These crimes are more intricate as they happen to be borderless, involving multiple countries. A specific taxonomy, is hence essential, and remains an open source solution at the behest of the Organisation. A public awareness campaign was carried out by the Organisation, called #BECareful, which drew attention to one of the most common types of scams that are carried out, i.e., Business Email Compromise, also known as the BEC or CEO fraud. Email systems are hacked using social engineering tactics in order to gain information about corporate payment systems and deceive customers into transferring money.

Project Gateway was endorsed by member countries that allowed INTERPOL access to any cyber threats and intelligence based thereupon. Operation Night Fury, was a specialized program to combat a unique strain of malware that targeted e-commerce websites. This operation led to arrest of three persons in Indonesia, accused of facilitation of the crime. Singapore was also able to take out two more command and control servers that belonged to the ring.

Cryptocurrency, undoubtedly, is on the rise to being the next big thing. However, the potential it possesses, comes at a big cost. Growing interest in the field also means for larger opportunity for scams and frauds related to it. This offence is referred to as 'Cryptojacking'. In June, 2019, an operation in Southeast Asia was carried out to combat cryptojacking. More than 20,000 hacked routers were identified with the help of this operation. One such program put in place to combat cryptojacking was Operation Goldfish Alpha, which reduced the infected computer systems by approximately 78%, throughout its course of coming into life.

Organised and emerging crimes

Awareness campaigns aimed at promoting border integrity, that was part of Project IDEA, helped Member Nations strengthen their borders through evolved technical structures. A similar operation, which was the fourth edition of its kind, known as Operation Sunbird, was in force to mobilize 10 countries that belonged to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in a concerted effort to detect and capture suspects of terror that were crossing borders in the region. The fourth edition was solely focused on maintaining maritime borders to ensure they remained as water tight as possible. It led to arrests of 24 persons and helped further identify 36 leads linked to terror suspects. Detection of fraudulent travel documents was also targeted through various INTERPOL training courses. In 2019, five countries, namely, Mexico, Nigeria, Rwanda,

Turkmenistan and Vietnam were extended courses on examination of forensic documents, which was attended by experts, border control officers, prosecutors and immigration officials.

Other significant areas of concern that were dealt with under this branch of crime included Airplane ticket and other travel documentation fraud, which included Operation RIPTIDE, which prevented movement of terrorists through land, air or sea.

Illicit markets are associated with trafficking of weapons and drugs, which may either be stolen or produce counterfeits. The demand in the black markets is heavily responsible in regulating this sector of the market. One of the largest ever drug seizures was reported in September of 2019, in Guinea Bissau. The IRT seized approximately 1.8 tonnes of cocaine, worth somewhere between 60 to 80 million Euros, through that operation.

Apart from the above mentioned crimes, the INTERPOL has also made several leaps and bounds in other forms of crimes throughout the globe. These include environmental crimes, regulating and supporting environment security and enforcing the principle of polluters pay, and also crimes against wildlife.

Shortcomings

The INTERPOL, as an International Organisation, no doubt, has made quite a significant impact since its coming into establishment. However, no matter the leaps and bounds made, it still possesses certain areas that need to be addressed and improved upon. It still faces a few challenges, both functional and structural in nature. Issues such as constitutional constraints, international cooperation, treatment of international terrorism and non-existence of a universal extradition agreement still prevail.

Of all the leading areas of crimes that INTERPOL concerns itself with, with the exception in dealing with crimes relating to drug trafficking, it happens to fall short of the expectations of the international community.¹⁹ Many believe this is due to the fact that it lacks an aggressive approach in coordinating legislations and government policies in Member countries. What hinders smoother functioning of the Organisation is the absence of adequate and appropriate legislations, nationally, within Member nations, related to crimes that are targeted by them. INTERPOL, however, has had success in dealing with drug trafficking and drug related crimes, by seizing drugs cartels and rings throughout the world. However, it still poses problems as these cartels are dismembered almost immediately and thereafter replaced. The Organisation has not

¹⁹ Michael Fooner, *INTERPOL*, (Springer US, I, 1989)

been able to introduce newer and more effective strategies that would strike the very source of the drug suppliers, often only being able to seize the peddlers who only deal with smaller amount of drugs that are distributed.

However, INTERPOL has had a very conflicting role with how it has dealt with anti-terrorism and how it has approached in the current scenario. Terrorism, was introduced in the mandate of the Organisation at a very later point. Initially, terrorism was refused to be considered under the purview of 'ordinary law crimes'. However, many Members felt the need for anti-terrorist groups to be formulated at their own regional or national levels. Only, as late as in 1986, did the Organisation manage to set up a unit, known as the anti-terrorist unit-TE Group. But the late induction of the program only meant problems of indifference. The regions that were heavily under attacks from terrorist groups already had some or the other kind of anti-terrorism group. To add to the burden, late induction of the group meant that the TE group was a fairly new program that was pit against terrorism that had already assumed a cancerous proportion in the area.²⁰ The 1980s saw a huge rise in the number of terrorist activities. The Organisation could do only little in the form of conducting symposiums, seminars and training sessions, but lacked any action-oriented programs.

The Organisation maintains a list of active international terrorists and terrorist groups, who it claims to monitor regularly. However, this list is quite limited. Many of such terrorist groups are ones that cause havoc domestically in countries without any such direct global impact, and hence, are not particularly listed here, but merely as 'regional organized criminal gangs with significant international influence'.²¹ After the occurrence of the 9/11 attacks, the Organisation has attempted to attach more such names under the list than what it originally began with, but still has a long way to tread.

One area that the INTERPOL has struggled with for years and is still in distress upon is the issue of extradition. The INTERPOL has adopted a rather dogmatic perspective towards its view on extradition. It is considered as one of the most effective provisions to have been put in place via which several forms of international offences could be suppressed. However, all the hard work that the International Organisation puts in, through conducting investigation, communicating to various police forces, tracking of suspects, and even arresting convicts, often is rendered useless

²⁰ Chapter 7: Interpol's future: Problems and Prospects, *Available at:*

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/14325/12/12_chapter%207.pdf (Last visited on October 4, 2020)

²¹ Raymond Kendall (1991)

when after going through all the turmoil, a country may refuse to extradite the criminal. The extradition policies of a country are often related to its government and judicial authorities, and all that the INTERPOL can do in such a situation is put in a request to extradite, but in no way can it persuade a Member, as it would undermine the sovereignty of a nation.²² Deeper ideological issues may also block the path as well, which constitute political asylum and hospitality for refugees. Extradition can only be successfully carried out when member nations conclude bilateral treaties on the same, and the INTERPOL can in no way influence them. It still remains one of the largest inefficiencies that the Organisation is puzzled with and has a major constraint on its efficiency. What is proposed of the INTERPOL is that a specified list be charted out, depending on which, a criminal be extradited. The principles on which this would be based upon should solely restrict itself to 'ordinary law crimes', and not intruding into the realm of racial or political crimes.

The Constitution of the INTERPOL is based on cooperation of the member nations. However, if a member decides to refuse cooperation, no provisions in its Constitution can reprimand the member. This means that none of the members are in any way obligated to comply with the instructions of the General Secretariat. It holds a different position as compared to the United Nations charter, which has incorporated in it, such a provision to ensure cooperation. A need for a more commanding position has become ever more essential to bring about a sense of uniformity in assistance forwarded.

Conclusion:

The INTERPOL, though faced with numerous limitations and shortcomings, has proved to work in quite a satisfactory manner since its inception. The level of transparency that it is bound to maintain and has indeed managed to do, has indicated the effort in providing an improved system for multinational cooperation among police forces.

Although its needs to adopt a more aggressive stand on the policies it creates, to ensure more than just moral obligation on part of the members, its mild approach that focuses on the individual and regionalism, causes more good than harm.

INTERPOL definitely has something special to offer to the world with its advanced technology and revolutionary ideas. However, with the dynamic objectives and aims that the Organisation wishes to achieve, a significant expansion and exploration in its role in mentoring police forces is

²² Michael Fooner, *INTERPOL*, 140 (Springer US, I, 1989)

required on a constant basis. The untapped potential of the INTERPOL has to be taken full advantage of.

