



**THE HON MICHAEL KEENAN MP
MINISTER FOR JUSTICE**

**Panel 5: ‘Contemporary Criminal Threats and New Challenges to Police
Cooperation’**

It’s a great pleasure for me to be here at the annual INTERPOL General Assembly in Monaco to mark 100 years of international police cooperation.

The interconnected nature of the world today has created a fast-paced and borderless criminal threat environment. Close cooperation to fight transnational crime both domestically and with our international allies, neighbours and friends –is paramount for safety and security globally.

The growth of criminal networks that operate with little regard for national boundaries is a global concern and a significant law enforcement challenge we all share. In the last decade, the rapid pace of globalisation has sparked tremendous economic, technological and social changes across the globe. Internet and mobile communications technologies have revolutionised banking and commerce and have enabled the development of online social networks.

Alongside the vast economic and social benefits made possible by these technologies, criminal groups have also extensively used modern communications technology to facilitate criminal activity.

In this setting, terrorism and financial crime are two areas of criminal offending that demand a proactive and coordinated response from government and law enforcement. Addressing these threats requires both political will and concerted action.

Today I want to share some aspects of Australia’s policy and legislative approach to counter the threat posed by terrorism, as well as strategies Australia has adopted to target proceeds of crime and to prevent reinvestment of proceeds of crime in further criminal activity.

At first glance, these are two very different kinds of criminal activity that require different law enforcement responses. However in both cases, success depends on cooperation at every level, both domestically and internationally, to share information, intelligence and experiences.

MINISTERIAL MEETING - PANEL #5.5 - AUSTRALIA

Terrorism and Foreign Fighters

The rapid resurgence in violent extremism and the willingness of individuals to cross borders to participate in overseas conflicts present new and complex security challenges for Australia. The number of people, regrettably including Australians, who have travelled to conflict zones. This is a significant challenge that I know is shared by many partners present today.

While Australia is well served by its law enforcement, intelligence and border security agencies and through partnerships with other police agencies through INTERPOL, we must not become complacent.

On 12 September 2014, the Australian Government raised Australia's National Terrorism Public Alert Level from MEDIUM to HIGH. This is the first time the Public Alert Level has been increased to this level, which serves to remind us that the threat of a domestic terrorist attack remains real.

A key feature of the contemporary terrorist threat is the use of the internet and technology for terrorist purposes, including recruitment and radicalisation, training, financing and coordinating attacks. The technological environment is highly complex and poses a persistent and evolving challenge for law enforcement.

In responding to these challenges, the Australian Government has ensured that Australian security and law enforcement agencies have the resources to respond to the terrorist threat by investing an additional \$630 million to support a range of new counter terrorism measures. Further, the government has legislation before the Parliament to make a range of targeted improvements to Australia's national security legislation.

These measures will further strengthen Australia's ability to deal with returning foreign fighters and persons supporting foreign conflict by ensuring law enforcement agencies have the necessary tools and legislation to effectively counter the current threat. The changes will also prevent extremists from departing Australia to fight in foreign conflicts, as well as broaden the criteria for proscribing terrorist organisations.

In addition to these legislative responses to the threat of criminal terrorist activity, the Australian Government recognises that communities play a central role in meeting the challenge of violent extremism and the radicalisation of Australian citizens and residents.

Australia's new Countering Violent Extremism program will work in close partnership with Australian communities to address factors placing young Australians at risk of radicalisation. The Countering Violent Extremism program will incorporate referral and support processes for individuals at risk to help them disengage from their activities. Some of the options we are considering to combat this risk include youth diversion activities, healthcare, mentoring, employment and educational pathway support and counselling.

MINISTERIAL MEETING - PANEL #5.5 - AUSTRALIA

In cooperation with communities, industry and overseas partners, the program will also provide education to communities and individuals-at-risk to combat online radicalisation. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) is also undertaking positive community engagement through targeted strategies such as Community Liaison Teams to complement this national approach. The aim of these teams is to increase community resilience to extremist behaviours, create greater levels of social cohesion and reduce the likelihood of vulnerable individuals becoming radicalised.

However, strong domestic responses to violent extremism will not be enough to meet this challenge. Building stronger law enforcement partnerships and enhancing our police-to-police cooperation must be a major part of our response. INTERPOL will remain important in facilitating this cooperation.

The Australian Government is committed to taking the necessary action for the safety of Australians and the interests of Australia's national security. The range of legislative, operational and community preventative measures I have mentioned today, in combination with a strong commitment to international law enforcement cooperation will provide the foundation for Australia's response to the threat of modern terrorism.

Proceeds of Crime

The second theme I want to focus on today is removing the profit incentive from crime. Australia is targeting the criminal economy to combat serious and organised crime by removing the profit from crime and preventing its reinvestment in further criminal activity. In this context, we are focusing on creating a hostile environment for financial crime by targeting professional money laundering syndicates based in Australia and overseas that service domestic and international crime groups.

A key challenge in effectively combatting financial crime is working across jurisdictions – with differing legal regimes and processes - to respond to the increasingly sophisticated methods used by organised crime groups.

INTERPOL plays an essential role in facilitating international cooperation.

In our shared goal of combating organised crime, I encourage all nations to further develop international policing partnerships and strive to expedite legal and procedural reforms to keep pace with the fast-moving and dynamic nature of organised crime.

The creation of the Criminal Assets Confiscation Taskforce (CACT) led by the Australian Federal Police is one measure undertaken by Australia to meet this challenge.

The innovative multi-agency Taskforce is proactive in its use of intelligence, operations, legal, policy and other specialist resources from all participating agencies to identify and pursue criminal wealth. The Taskforce has enhanced collaboration and information sharing across government agencies as well as the private sector.

MINISTERIAL MEETING - PANEL #5.5 - AUSTRALIA

As Minister responsible for the Australian Federal Police, I have a special interest in ensuring the success of the Taskforce. Its effectiveness to date is evidenced by the substantial increase in the value of the assets restrained since its establishment in January 2011:

- a. The year before the Taskforce was created Commonwealth authorities restrained approximately \$19 million in assets.
- b. Over \$287 million in assets have been restrained since the inception of the Taskforce.

The Taskforce has also been a vital tool to assist in the identification, restraint and confiscation of proceeds of crime at the request of foreign countries and has restrained approximately \$21 million worth of foreign proceeds of crime, in response to mutual legal assistance requests made by foreign partners.

All confiscated money, and funds derived from the sale of confiscated assets, are returned to the Commonwealth and then reinvested into the Australian community through a variety of law enforcement initiatives including, local crime prevention, intervention and drug treatment and diversionary measures.

Closing

In seeking to address contemporary criminal threats such as terrorism, and stopping the flow of profits from crime, Australia's experience is that no single agency, government, or industry body working alone can be successful.

Criminal organisations seek out and target weaknesses in regulation and law enforcement capability. The importance of strong and proactive partnerships between police organisations cannot be understated. By working together, we will maximise our effectiveness and ensure we can work towards a global solution to the challenge of transnational crime.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Australia's experience of the importance of strong domestic and international partnerships to address these contemporary threats to our safety and security.

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