



INTERPOL

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COPPER THEFT
Conferenza nazionale sui furti di rame

SPEECH

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921 words

Honourable Minister of Interior Alfano,

Prefect Pansa, *Head of Police, Director General of Public Security;*

Mr Peleggi, *Head of the Italian Customs Services;*

Prefect Cirillo, *Deputy director General of Public Security;*

Mr Moretti, CEO of the Italian Railway Company and our host,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a pleasure for me to represent INTERPOL at this meeting, and I would like to thank the Italian authorities for associating INTERPOL to this meeting on metal theft.

The fact that this meeting is hosted by the Italian Railways - and the presence here of business leaders representing public utility companies - provides for an excellent forum , bringing all stakeholders together.

This is exactly what is needed if we want to have concrete discussions on this phenomenon.

While copper theft may not make the headlines of the newspapers in the same manner as terrorism or child abuse, this issue does deserve our attention.

The scale of the problem is of concern in many countries, including Italy, with an estimated economic

loss that is measured in millions of euros. Open sources report about 3.2 tons of copper stolen yearly only to the Railway Company for a value of around 20 million euros.

In the United Kingdom, the economic loss of metal theft is estimated at a staggering 700 million pounds sterling, while the direct costs to the railway network exceeds ten million pounds a year.

But the issue of metal theft has a dimension well beyond property crime alone. Already in 2008, the American Federal Bureau of Investigation¹ (FBI) qualified copper theft as a threat to the United States critical infrastructure.

Derailed trains², fires, disrupted communications that lead directly to disasters because air traffic control is disrupted and emergency services cannot be reached,

¹ <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2008/december/copper-theft-intel-report-unclass>

² On 11 January 2011, an ICE *train derailed* near the Dutch city of Zevenaar. The cause of the accident was the *theft* of 300 meters of *copper* cable. (Wikipedia). There are other documented cases.

compromise the safety of workers - all these risks have either already materialized or are very likely to occur.

Due to the demand, prices for copper on the global commodity market are high. Penalties for these thefts are relative low. This makes metal theft an attractive target for organized crime groups.

Faced with this situation, it seems evident that, in order to curb the worrying increase of copper theft, coordinated action of all partners is needed, but at the national and international level.

You have just heard the customs and Europol perspective. It is clear that a lot remains to be done and that there is potential for all of us to work together in this area.

Last spring, INTERPOL participated in the Action Day on Metal Theft.

Working alongside our colleagues from Europol, we ensured that our global network of National Central Bureaus supported the operations. This collective work led to 200 theft cases identified, 266 arrests, and approximately 500,000 euros of stolen metal seized.

However, it also enabled us to identify gaps in our knowledge, both on the extent of the problem and, more importantly, on the crime networks behind large scale metal thefts.

Europol is addressing these gaps through the excellent analytical work being carried out as part of the FURTUM, one of its Serious and Organized crime focal points, targeting mobile criminal groups involved in property crime.

However, if we are to make a concerted effort to target the organized crime networks behind these thefts, we must, together, ensure to use all the already

existing law enforcement tools and services that are available to us.

And this is precisely where INTERPOL can make an important contribution, both through our network of 190 member countries and our tools and services as well as our global police databases.

I would particularly encourage the following:

- To make a concerted effort to report metal thefts. This is a responsibility that goes beyond law enforcement alone, but where we need to work with the industry: comprehensive reporting starts with the victim and is essential for law enforcement in clearly understanding the scope of the problem.

Similarly, reporting thefts and sharing your national assessment on the phenomenon with

INTERPOL is a good practice – efforts at the national level alone, are not sufficient;

- Critically important: to use the INTERPOL global police databases effectively when national investigations lead to the identification of suspects and/or arrests. Checking their names, fingerprints, their identity and travel documents against our global databases may reveal critical leads that will link investigations in different countries together.

A person involved in metal theft in one country may be known for other criminal activity in another country.

- If you see additional ways for INTERPOL to assist you, please share them with us. We can help and assist you in many ways, notably by bringing investigators from affected countries and regions throughout the world and - other law enforcement stakeholders such as Europol, the World Customs

Organization – together to discuss specific investigations and best practices.

I would like to commend Italy for providing us the opportunity to exchange views on this today. Before concluding my remarks, I would like to share one last thought with you. In the future, it will become increasingly important for law enforcement to meet with industry representatives to tackle emerging crime phenomena.

In a fast changing world, reaching out beyond traditional borders is increasingly relevant and important to our success. Gatherings such as this forum provide an excellent model for us to prepare the future.

Thank you.