

Interpol media release

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Global congress addresses international counterfeits threat.

Immediate action required to combat threat to finance/health.

LYON, France – International law enforcement officials, government and business leaders are calling for more co-ordinated and effective action to tackle counterfeiting, which is estimated to cost millions in addition to threatening thousands of lives.

The aim of the Second Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy is to identify what strategies are working in addressing this crime and to find new solutions and opportunities for co-operation in reducing its impact.

More than 500 delegates from 66 countries are attending the two-day congress co-sponsored by Interpol and the World Customs Organization (WCO), with support from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

'Although we have seen significant developments in terms of improved co-operation between different agencies since the first Congress 18 months ago, we realise there is still much work to be done,' said Interpol Secretary General Ronald K. Noble. 'No one country can tackle these crimes on its own. We have already seen significant results from transnational operations in Latin America, and we must now work to build on these successes throughout the rest of the world.'

'At a time when chief police officers are focused on terrorism and other grave crimes it is important that they do not underestimate the damage intellectual property crime does to our economies and the potential threat to public safety.'

Although many people regard counterfeit items as 'harmless fakes,' the trade affects almost every part of daily life, including pharmaceuticals, implantable medical devices, aircraft and car parts, and food, drink and consumer products.

'Counterfeiting and product piracy has reached an unacceptable level, and I have been shocked on my visits to Africa, Asia and parts of Europe to witness the range and extent of the abuse. In particular, I am concerned at the effect caused by counterfeit pharmaceuticals and other health and safety related products on communities,' WCO Secretary General Michel Danet said. 'The economic and social well being of all countries is at risk and this makes me even more determined to ensure that customs services throughout the world play an active part in combating this trade.'

Counterfeit anti-malarial drugs and baby milk have already contributed to a number of deaths throughout the world, and the World Health Organization estimates that more than 10 per cent of medicines on the global market are fake, rising to nearly 25 per cent in developing countries.

'While we are still far away from a major breakthrough in the fight against the global problem of counterfeiting and piracy, there are already important signs for a change in perception and political determination and readiness for action,' said WIPO Deputy Director General Rita

Hayes. 'In order to be successful in the global marketplace all countries, industrialised as well as developing, need to adopt an effective intellectual property policy.'

An effective fight against counterfeiting and piracy is only possible through co-ordination between the public and private sectors. This ongoing co-operation is highlighted by the involvement of the Global Business Leaders Alliance Against Counterfeiting (GBLAAC), the International Trademark Association (INTA), the International Security Management Association (ISMA) and the International Chamber of Commerce.

'There has been an unprecedented level of new interest this year in counterfeiting and piracy issues from both government and industry, and the introduction of so many new initiatives to deal with the ever-expanding trade in fake goods is encouraging,' said William Dobson, Executive Director of GBLAAC. 'However, the problem is still growing, and the challenge ahead is to convert this activity into concrete actions that drive the counterfeiters out of business and into jail where they belong.'

'While I am here representing the International Trademark Association, solving the problem of counterfeiting goes well beyond legal remedies, and the second Global Congress is precisely the sort of forum that advances such co-operation,' said INTA President Anne Gundelfinger.

For more information, please contact Interpol at press@interpol.int or the WCO at communication@wcoomd.org, or visit www.interpol.int, www.wcoomd.org or www.ccapcongress.net.