



**BIENNIAL CONFERENCE
COPENHAGEN
DENMARK**

25-27 May 2010

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

Welcome

On behalf of the ICPRA Executive Committee, and especially our hosts the Danish Police Union – the Politiforbundet – I would like once again to welcome delegates to Copenhagen for the Biennial Conference of the International Council of Police Representative Associations.

We have nearly 30 delegates this year, representing more than 30 countries, spanning four continents.

Through our affiliated members, we represent the interests of well over one million professional police and law enforcement officers worldwide.

Thank you all for your commitment to advancing their interests, in travelling so far to be part of this important conference.



Conference 2010 theme

The theme of our conference this year is “the Effect of the Global Recession on Policing and Police”.

The theme reflects that the worldwide recession is the single biggest issue which has impacted on our members over the last two years.

It will continue to impact, as governments continue to cut public spending – including on police – and crime continues to rise.

Our police services will continue to face pressure to “do more with less”. And many of our members will be expected to be paid less to do it.

But before we begin our conference in earnest, it is useful to remind ourselves of where we have come from, as an organisation; and where we are going.

Advancing ICPRA

Our shared vision for ICPRA is that through greater interaction, cooperation, and mutual assistance, we can all enhance our ability to advance the interests of the hundreds of thousands of police officers we, collectively, represent.



Each of our countries and organisations is unique. But we also recognise that we have much in common – because at its heart, the duties, responsibilities and skills of policing are fundamental to every society.

The theme of our last conference, in Wellington, was “Advancing ICPRA.”

That theme reflected our realisation that ICPRA needed to develop, so we could be more able to take advantage of our collective global strength, in influencing the policing issues that ultimately affect our members.

ICPRA grew from the earlier International Law Enforcement Council (ILEC).

ILEC was a Canadian initiative, to which many of our organisations immediately responded. The time was right: we all recognised that police unions and associations increasingly face challenges that are larger in scope than any single jurisdiction.

Police workforce reform

Those challenges include the so-called police reform agenda, under which police services all around the world are re-thinking workforce composition.

Central to that agenda is the “carving up” of a range of policing roles into different jobs – and then providing only the limited training required for that specific job.

This goes beyond civilianisation of support roles. It has led to the creation of new types of operational ‘second tier’ police, such as the UK’s PCSOs or New Zealand’s Authorised Officers.

These officers wear uniforms, and have some powers – but are not versatile, well-trained police constables in the traditional sense.

The risk is these changes undermine the concept of the highly trained, adaptable, generalist police constable. For most of us, those constables are the membership base we represent.

The police reform agenda is driven by academic and administrative thinking, which is developed and shared across police services.

The underlying issues and pressures – such as insatiable demand for police services, combined with government funding pressures – are common to all of our jurisdictions. We can improve our ability to respond as police associations, in our own jurisdictions, if we also share our views and experience.

Global economic crisis

The current global economic crisis also affects us all. Many of our associations have seen members affected by staff cuts; pay cuts; cuts to conditions such as superannuation, allowances, and other entitlements.

In some jurisdictions, cuts have been avoided. We can all benefit from each others' experiences. Some of us may have found creative solutions to avoid or delay cuts. Others may have found success through political or public engagement to build support for maintaining police spending as a 'special case'.

International policing

We also stand to gain a lot by cooperating in our response to international policing issues.

This was identified at the Wellington conference.

This includes operational policing with an international dimension – such as policing the drugs trade, people smuggling and other organised crime, and terrorism.

Those issues feed through to new work priorities and pressures for our members. There is much to be gained by being well informed as police association representatives, when we engage with administrations and governments to improve the legislative and policy environment our members are working in.

In this context, we have a session on organised crime later on during the conference, which I am sure will be extremely informative.

We can learn valuable lessons from each others' experience in these fields, and related issues affecting our members, like corruption and increasing prevalence of firearms in crime.

Many, if not most of us, also have members involved in international deployments, in peacekeeping, post-conflict stabilisation, reconstruction or capacity building roles.

It is not an over-statement to say that police services are now as important to peacekeeping and international conflict resolution as are militaries.



The logic behind that is clear. A society with a fair, effective and efficient justice system – built round a good police service – is much more likely to be stable and peaceful.

Involvement in international deployments, for New Zealand and I'm sure most other police, has generally been very positive for members at a personal level. But the increasing demands of such deployments pose challenges for many of us.

Those include placing pressure on our own police service's infrastructures and resources – planning and managing deployments, and covering the gaps left on the frontline.

They include practical difficulties, with potential impacts to career progression, pay and conditions, and ongoing health support or compensation for conditions developed 'in theatre'.

Those are all issues which police associations and unions have a clear role in responding to, on behalf of members – and they are issues on which we can assist each other through ICPRA.

Engagement with the UN

At the higher level, our last conference agreed there is clear potential for ICPRA to play a role in liaising with the organisations that initiate and mandate the international missions. Key amongst those organisations is the United Nations.

The UN in recent years has responded to the increasing reliance on police in peacekeeping through development of a Police Division within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, or “DPKO”. This division has been involved in developing standards, norms, and doctrine governing deployments.

It is our members who are being deployed – yet police associations have had no input into this process, to ensure members’ interests are looked after.

The UN Development Programme, or “UNDP”, also has a strong interest and involvement in international policing deployments, particularly in providing assistance with developing skills and capacity in police services in post-conflict societies.

Again, there is potential for ICPRA to engage with the UNDP in a mutually beneficial way – both to ensure our members’ interests are protected, and to assist in achieving rule-of-law objectives, by lending

our experience and expertise in the development of strong, democratic police associations alongside police services.

In line with these objectives, the ICPRA Executive Committee has focussed on beginning to build relationships with both arms of the UN over the last two years.

UN DPKO

I met with the then-head of the DPKO's Police Division, Mr Andrew Hughes, in New York in June last year. Mr Hughes was receptive to ICPRA input and involvement. Unfortunately, Mr Hughes returned to Australia soon afterwards, though he committed to making a strong recommendation to his principals that ICPRA be consulted on future deployments.

Since then, I have been in contact with Mr Hughes' successor in the role, Ms Ann-Marie Orlor. She was receptive to the idea of involvement in this conference, but due to resource and personnel constraints, that did not prove to be possible.

Instead, I met with Ms Orlor and a DPKO recruiting official, Ata Yenigun, in New York on Friday 14 May on my way here.



Ms Orlor, a Swedish police officer, reported that the UN currently has 17 peacekeeping operations around the globe. These range from Cyprus, where they have been for over 40 years, to Gineau Bissau, the latest deployment. There are currently more than 13,000 officers deployed, with authority to go to 16,000.

The UN also has a standing force of police, based in Brindisi, Italy, made up mostly of police officers on secondment or unpaid leave from their own forces. The standing force currently comprises 25 individual officers, but UNDPKO hopes to expand this to 40 by the end of the year, and to 100 over the next few years.

The standing force is, conceptually, intended to be a police 'ready reaction force,' but it is acknowledged that in practice the force is currently too small to be able to do much more than facilitate.

My assessment is that the UN DPKO is not particularly enthusiastic about a relationship with ICPRA, largely because they foresee ICPRA's involvement complicating an already-difficult task.

They point out that most of their member states are anti-unionisation of police. Clearly, they are concerned ICPRA could make life difficult for them by advocating for our members who are deployed.



They did however freely admit the working conditions for police on UN duty are poor – given the state of the societies where deployments typically take place.

From our point of view, I believe this all re-confirms that we need to be involved.

Clearly, the UN DPKO would prefer we focus on advocating for our members within our own jurisdictions.

However, they did acknowledge the legitimacy of our interest, and that there was some potential for an ICPRA role.

For example, in response to my suggestion that a relationship could be mutually beneficial, they suggested we could advocate for more police advisers at the permanent missions in New York. At present there are only 10 police advisers, compared to 83 military advisers.

This constrains the “police voice” when it comes to UN discussion around deployments.

They also saw a role for ICPRA in advising members about jobs available on individual missions or deployments. Their view is jurisdictions often don't send the right people for the job.

We discussed the issue of poorly selected ranking officers from second and third world police forces having command over staff, but being dangerously ill equipped to do so.

The DPKO pointed out they only appoint the Commander and Deputy to missions. The rest are appointed on location, and politics plays a major part.

They also said they were trying to introduce pre-deployment training with common competencies, but know that selection for UN posting from many countries is seen as a moneymaking opportunity and is thus subject to corruption. They have an integrated training service within the DPKO working in this area.

Again, I see these issues as re-affirming the need for ICPRA to play a role.

I believe, despite some reluctance, there is scope for ICPRA to continue engaging with the DPKO, and that we can find areas of special interest as a basis for doing so. Over time our involvement and acknowledged relevance will continue to grow.

There may shortly be an escalation of UN activity and numbers in Cyprus, following the renegotiation of borders. If that occurs, or if

there is to be another deployment somewhere like Somalia, these will be key opportunities to engage further.

As we continue to engage, we need to be aware of our own limitations, and be careful not to oversell or over-commit ourselves.

I believe the relationship with the DPKO is a good fit to our capabilities, because they too are limited in what they can actually do. They act more as facilitators, than practitioners. I think this role sits naturally in parallel with ICPRA's role.

If the next ICPRA is held in Washington, it is likely DPKO will attend, provided we are clear in our expectations of their involvement.

UNDP

When I visited the United Nations in June 2009, I also began relationship building with the UN Development Programme (UNDP). A new Administrator had just been appointed – fortuitously, that was former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, with whom I have a good relationship.

This helped ensure a more immediate recognition of the potential of cooperation between the UNDP and ICPRA, and 'top down' endorsement of further engagement.

That relationship has reached a new milestone with the involvement of UNDP representatives in this conference, later today.

I am confident that the advances we have made in recent weeks with both UN bodies, and those we will make through this conference, will continue to advance our cause and bear fruit in future.

Membership

In addition to the relationship with the UN agencies, the Executive Committee has moved forward since the last conference to place ICPRA membership on a more formal footing.

Partly that has been driven by a recognition that, in order to be taken seriously by other potential partner organisations and media, we need to have credible, transparent and clearly understandable foundations.

That includes development of more formal documentation, and establishing financial and reporting accountabilities. Progress on those issues will be reported later on this conference.

However, relevant to these developments, and the introduction of a nominal affiliation fee, have been some changes in membership.



NAPO and the Garda Representative Association have been unable to commit to ongoing affiliation for the time being.

At the same time, while in New York, I was able to meet with Mr John Adler, President of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers' Association (FLEOA). FLEOA is interested in ICPRA membership.

As with any such request, FLEOA's affiliation is subject to endorsement by the conference. I am very pleased to welcome John to the conference, where he will receive that endorsement in person. And if the endorsement is not forthcoming, at least he will enjoy himself while he's here.

The theme of the 2008 conference was 'Advancing ICPRA'. Thanks to the work we did there, we have advanced in the two years since.

I want at this point to pay tribute to the role of the Canadian Police Association over many years with ICPRA.

As I have already mentioned, ICPRA's forerunner, ILEC, was a Canadian initiative. The Canadian Police Association supported the concept tirelessly, and kept the momentum going – particularly through the work of Mr Dale Kinnear, who was until recently General Secretary of ICPRA.



Due to changing circumstances, the CPA late last year had to relinquish its role as host of the ICPRA secretariat.

It is testament to the organisation they have been so instrumental in building, that ICPRA is able to continue to move forward. We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the CPA for helping us get here.


Through the course of this conference, and despite the economic challenges which influence our theme this year, we will continue to advance.

The logic underpinning our cooperation is compelling. If we didn't already have ICPRA, we would have to invent it. We can only grow in strength.

Discussion and debate, through a very full agenda over the next two days, is a key part of that.

On behalf of the delegates, I would like to thank our Danish hosts for their considerable work in organising this conference, and – as always – their wonderful hospitality in welcoming us to Copenhagen.

As Chair, I would like once more to bid welcome to you all, as delegates. I trust you will find this conference lively, informative, and engaging.



Greg O'Connor
ICPRA CHAIRMAN