

## **Renewing the commitment to human rights: ECBA statement on the priorities for the incoming INTERPOL Secretary-General - November 2, 2024**

At its General Assembly in November 2024, INTERPOL is set to appoint a new Secretary-General to succeed Mr Jürgen Stock. At this important juncture, the European Criminal Bar Association (ECBA) calls for renewed commitment to reform.

The ECBA welcomes the reforms implemented in the last decade. The Refugee Policy of 2014 has provided vital protection for those forced to flee persecution. More resources have been applied to vetting red notices prior to publication. The Statute of the Commission for the Control of Files (CCF), which entered into force in 2017, has promised more effective remedies for victims of abuse.

These reforms have started to address widespread public and political concerns about the misuse of INTERPOL and have increased trust in INTERPOL's work.

However, the ECBA – many of whose global membership of criminal defence lawyers work regularly on INTERPOL cases – is concerned that further reforms are needed to address pressing issues still affecting many cases. Immediate priorities include:

- **Pre-emptive requests** – The time has come to spell out a clear and consistent process for warning the General Secretariat (IPSG) of anticipated misuses of INTERPOL's systems and to challenge a proposed publication at the CCF to stop alerts being circulated that then need to be recalled.
- **Asylum & Extradition** – INTERPOL must overcome challenges to the Refugee Policy's effectiveness (e.g. authentication of asylum decisions) and ensure that national courts' decisions refusing extradition are given appropriate weight to stop alerts triggering repeated and unjustified arrests and legal proceedings.
- **CCF delays** – Solutions must be found to the systemic issues and under-resourcing which lead to CCF proceedings taking far longer than they should, exacerbating the impact upon victims of abusive red notices.
- **CCF fairness issues** – Conditions must be created whereby CCF procedures offer applicants a fair hearing, in particular by ensuring that National Central Bureau's observations in response to complaints are disclosed to applicants for reply.

The ECBA appeals to INTERPOL, under its new leader, to engage constructively and openly with the practitioner community and with civil society in pursuit of further reforms. The ECBA will be gathering perspectives to bring detailed proposals to the table.

With the support of its member countries, INTERPOL's new Secretary General has a crucial opportunity to continue to build on the reforms of the past decade, demonstrate INTERPOL's commitment to human rights, and ensure full guarantees of the effective protection which is crucial to INTERPOL's important judicial immunity. This will help to achieve stronger police cooperation better able to meet the global challenges ahead.