

UNION AFRICAINE

الاتحاد الأفريقي

UMOJA WA AFRIKA



UNION AFRICAINE

UNION AFRICAINE

UNION AFRICAINE

AFRICAN UNION POLICE COOPERATION MECHANISM (AFRIPOL)

NATIONAL ROAD, N° 36 BEN AKNOUN ALGIERS, ALGERIA, PO.BOX 61 BIS TEL : 213 23 38 43 56 FAX : 213 23 38 43 58

Site Web : <https://afripol.africa-union.org/> E-mail: afripol@africa-union.org

INTERPOL 27th African Regional Conference

Cape Town, South Africa

27-29 August 2025

**Statement of H.E Mahmoud Ali Youssouf,
Chairperson the African Union Commission**

**(Delivered by Amb Jalel Chelba,
Ag Executive Director of AFRIPOL)**

**Excellencies,
President of INTERPOL, Major General Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi
Ag Minister of Police of the Republic of South Africa, Prof Firoz Cachalia, MP,
INTERPOL Secretary-General, Mr Valdecy Urquiza
Esteemed members of the INTERPOL Executive Committee,
Honorable Heads of Delegations of Police Agencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a particular pleasure for me to join you today in Cape Town, mandated by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to deliver this address on his behalf. I wish to express, on behalf of the African Union and on my own behalf, our profound gratitude to His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa, the Government and the people of South Africa, for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to AU delegation. South Africa is not only a committed partner in promoting peace and security on the continent; it also embodies strong leadership in regional and international police cooperation. Your welcome in this iconic city provides an ideal setting for our exchanges and reinforces our shared determination to build a more secure future for all.

I would also like to thank INTERPOL's President for the exemplary organization of this 27th African Regional Conference. These meetings always provide us with an opportunity to strengthen our relationships, foster cooperation, and build the capacity of law enforcement agencies.

Over the course of these three days, our delegates will discuss crucial topics related to strengthening police cooperation in Africa, including the fight against transnational organized crime, the development of national and regional capacities, and cooperation between continental and international mechanisms such as AFRIPOL and INTERPOL.

This is a critical time. We are facing multiple crises simultaneously: geopolitical instability, climate change, and supply chain disruptions. These crises are being exploited by increasingly agile criminal networks, which are finding new opportunities to infiltrate, thrive, and destabilize. Meanwhile, transnational organized crime continues to plan, target, and strike, while becoming stronger and interconnected.

Recent joint operations organized by AFRIPOL and INTERPOL illustrate both the scale of the threats posed by transnational organized crime and the effectiveness of

international police cooperation. They demonstrate the importance of coordinated action to disrupt criminal networks and protect communities across the African continent.

Operation OTAPI, AFRIPOL's first cross-border operation against illicit goods, took place from 14–20 October 2024 and involved six West and East African countries. It resulted in the arrest of 80 suspects, the rescue of 12 victims of human trafficking, and the seizure of drugs, fake medicines, weapons, vehicles, false travel documents, and protected species.

Operations HAWK (2024), Eagles' Nest (23–27 September 2024), and Djembé (16–20 June 2025), all jointly organized by INTERPOL and AFRIPOL, eloquently illustrate the power of international police cooperation in the face of transnational organized crime. These operations have led, among other things, to the seizure of more than 4 tons of drugs, the arrest of hundreds of suspects, the dismantling of cross-border criminal networks, and the rescue of victims of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. They have also led to seizures of weapons, vehicles, and illicit goods worth millions of dollars.

Terrorism in Africa, meanwhile, persists and is transforming: from the Sahel-Saharan region to the Horn of Africa, armed groups are exploiting local tensions, relying on criminal revenues, and seeking to expand their influence. Joint AFRIPOL–INTERPOL and regional operations, such as Neptune and Usalama, have helped neutralize several cells and protect hundreds of victims, but the challenge remains immense. To translate these intentions into tangible progress, it would be useful to jointly explore several avenues for enhanced cooperation. One of these would be to establish a joint deconfliction framework between the African Union and INTERPOL for priority cross-border operations, in order to reduce the gray areas exploited by criminal networks.

In the same spirit, the creation of a specialized crypto-forensics working group, bringing together police forces and financial intelligence units, would make it possible to develop common protocols for exchanging indicators and coordinating asset freezes. We must institutionalize the junction between judicial police, financial intelligence units, and prosecution authorities to track dirty money and confiscate assets. Let's increase the number of digital evidence labs and share common playbooks on ransomware, social engineering, and platform scams.

We could also work towards developing a unified training catalogue, bringing together national academies, regional schools and e-learning platforms, to cover key areas such as cybersecurity, the fight against financial crime and digital forensics techniques. This capacity building could be accompanied by the deployment of regional task forces on high-risk corridors, both maritime and land, with shared objectives and common performance indicators.

At the same time, it would be important to define and adopt technical interoperability standards for the secure exchange of information between AFRIPOL and INTERPOL, ensuring that these gateways are tested, audited, and fully functional. Finally, the achievements of these initiatives should be institutionalized through sustainable standards, doctrines, and budgetary mechanisms to ensure their sustainability and impact. These proposals require joint leadership, effective coordination of partner support toward agreed priorities, and shared accountability.

In addition to INTERPOL's secure communications system (I-24/7) and its databases, AFRIPOL has developed its own secure communications system, AFSECOM, and its databases. Once its rules and regulations are approved, this system will provide major added value, perfectly complementing INTERPOL's. Cooperation between INTERPOL and AFRIPOL, through their respective national representations, the National Central Bureaus (NCBs) and the National Liaison Bureaus (NLBs), is essential. A document outlining guidelines for exemplary cooperation between the two organizations has already been developed and, once approved, will optimize synergies, streamline procedures, and maximize the effectiveness of joint operations.

We must also highlight the responsibility of our member countries, sustainable and predictable funding for cooperative policing is essential. Investing in information sharing, forensics, training, and joint operations is not a cost; it is a multiplier of security and trust. The African Union will continue to support and coordinate, respecting the sovereignty of its members and strategic partnerships. Our operational effectiveness is based on legitimacy. The AU supports the raising of ethical standards, the prevention of abuse, the protection of victims and witnesses, and the promotion of community-oriented policing. Technology must never obscure our values. Success is measured by results and their sustainability.

Excellencies,

In line with the guidance of our political bodies, we are consolidating legal frameworks, modernizing our secure information systems, and structuring targeted partnerships. Our goal is not AFRIPOL autonomy for its own sake, but a credible continental capacity, serving member states, harmoniously articulated with INTERPOL and regional organizations. This intelligent subsidiarity approach avoids duplication, optimizes resources, and maximizes impact.

The African Union is more determined than ever to strengthen its collaboration with INTERPOL, particularly through AFRIPOL, in order to optimize the potential of our police services, protect our citizens and consolidate the foundations of peace and prosperity on the continent.

I will conclude with a simple conviction: security is a collective effort. Criminals love our silos; they fear our bridges. Let us make Cape Town the moment when we connected our systems, united our efforts, and accelerated our action, with rigor, humanity, and ambition.

Thank you, and I look forward to a fruitful deliberation