

Why Must Taiwan Participate in the 92nd INTERPOL General Assembly!

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The mysterious and most tragic aviation incident of *Malaysia Airlines* Flight MH370 of March 8, 2014, in which an airliner carrying 239 people suddenly disappeared during its journey from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, brought attention to security deficiencies at airports and caused a great concern worldwide.

The investigation revealed that at least two passengers boarded the plane with stolen passports, which lead to speculations that a terrorist attack could be responsible for the plane's disappearance. Reasonably, the incident reminded all nations of the significance of regular and smooth access to the electronic archives of the *International Criminal Police Organisation* (INTERPOL), and more particularly to its data base of *Stolen/Lost Travel Documents* (SLTD) data base, which allow national authorities to screen passengers and ensure that they are not using illegal documents. Being an INTERPOL Member-State, Malaysia did have smooth access to the aforementioned database, but still failed to prevent the two men from boarding the airplane – thus exposing a breach of her airport security system.

In the light of the above, we may easily understand how much tougher are the security challenges faced by the Police Authorities of the *Republic of China - Taiwan*, which are not even allowed to access the aforementioned highly important data base of INTERPOL. In order for us to get an idea of the magnitude of the issue, let us take into consideration that, by 2014,

INTERPOL's SLTD data base contained information on more than 45.000.000 travel documents (passports, identity cards, visas) reported lost or stolen. The data base was searched by INTERPOL Member-States of the international organization more than one billion times, detecting nearly 72.000 cases of illegal travel documents – and we are only talking about one single year. However, Taiwan is not able to check travel documents against INTERPOL's database, nor can she directly send her own critical data of lost and stolen documents to that Organization's central depository.

This is due to Taiwan's ongoing exclusion from INTERPOL. Evidently, this situation causes a serious security deficit in the international aviation, and even more so when taking into account Taiwan's exclusion from the *International Civil Aviation Organisation* (ICAO) and its *Public Key Directory* (PKD). And the whole things becomes even more serious bearing in mind that Taipei FIR (*Taipei Flight Information Zone*) is the busiest on earth, carrying tens of millions of passengers each year. By the way, the busiest air route of the world is the one connecting Taipei with Hong-Kong!

This situation, which is both absurd and dangerous, is due to the fact that – by offering certain countries financial rewards or exercising politico-diplomatic pressure, and even blackmailing others – the People's Republic of China constantly attempts and achieves to block the participation of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in INTERPOL – as it does with ICAO, WHO, and other international institutions. Thus – though it had been an INTERPOL Member-State since 1964, before it was ejected in favour of Communist China – the Republic of China (Taiwan) sees itself excluded from access to data bases which contain information critical to international flights safety, security of aviation, and beyond.

Former Commissioner of the *Criminal Investigations Bureau* (CIB) of the Republic of China (Taiwan) Mr. Hsi-ho Li was therefore completely justified when he recently called on the INTERPOL Member-States to allow participation of his country in this international organization. Even more so as it seems not to be quite understood worldwide that, by torpedoing Taiwan's participation in INTERPOL, as in ICAO, Beijing does not “only” jeopardize the safety of Taiwan's airports and flights. For this sort of “whim” from the part of Beijing's party and state ruling elite does not only “punish” the 23.500.000 population of the island republic, which insists on defending their political freedoms and way of life while rejecting “unification” with a

communist regime, but it also poses a risk to the safety of tens of millions of passengers of all nationalities.

Meanwhile though, there is another important reason which has made Taiwan's participation in INTERPOL necessary: the imperative need for fighting *Transnational Telecommunication Fraud* in the post-COVID-19 era. We are all aware of the fact that the internet has become, to a large extent, part of our daily life in the post-pandemic era – see tele-working, tele-marketing, e-learning, financial and other transactions. Yet, as the former Commissioner of Taiwan's Criminal Investigation Bureau correctly put it in his momentous statement published in the international press (see: *Taiwan's participation can strengthen international cooperation to fight transnational telecommunication fraud in the post-pandemic era*), *in recent years, criminal organizations have shifted their tactics, fraud has become more diverse and sophisticated and scammers are working in new and constantly evolving ways – see the case of crypto-currencies.*

Taiwanese senior police authorities observed that, *when Taiwan's Police investigate cases, they often encounter difficulties arising from the fact that servers, recipient accounts, and crypto-currency exchange platforms used by perpetrators are based overseas.* Taiwan's exclusion from INTERPOL prevents Taiwanese Police officers from stopping the transfer of money in time to help the victims and makes it more difficult to track down suspects. At this point, the Commissioner correctly underlines that *the inflow of profits from fraud and other illegal activities involves money laundering, tax evasion, and other crimes that undermine domestic financial regulatory systems and, eventually, erode State Sovereignty.*

Space does not allow for listing in detail all dramatic facts. Yet, one of them must be brought to our readers' attention as it is the most shocking – since it is about organized *Human Trafficking!* As explained by Taiwan's CIB, *“anticipating that the number of job seekers would increase due to involuntary unemployment driven by the pandemic, criminal organizations set up call centers in various parts of the world and recruited people on a large scale through online advertising. The scammers used attractive slogans like “easy job” and “fast financial freedom” and promised stable and legal employment in other countries. Victims only discovered after arriving that the jobs involved fraud or were not what they expected. Some even had their passports confiscated, were deprived of their freedom, and were beaten or sold to other unlicensed*

businesses if they refused to comply. If they asked to quit, they were forced to pay exorbitant fines or threatened with organ removal to compensate the gangs.”

Such revealing Report written by a Senior Officer and based on huge professional experience is shocking, indeed. The Taiwanese Police have received reports of Taiwanese citizens being held against their will and forced to engage in fraudulent activities in Cambodia, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries by illegal organizations set up by PRC’s nationals.

Human Trafficking is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by the global community. In fact, it is a shame for human kind in the 21st century. The Taiwanese Police have spared no effort to crack down on this type of transnational crime while seeking for international co-operation, on bilateral base at least, i.e., with Japan, Singapore, et al. It would only be beneficial for the international community though if such co-operation to fight transnational electronic fraud in the post-pandemic era would become institutionalized at INTERPOL level.

Issuing an invitation to Taiwan to take part in the 92nd *INTERPOL General Assembly*, which will take place at Glasgow, Scotland, UK, from November 4 to November 7, would certainly be a good start. The international community would only profit from Taiwan’s high professionalism, know-how and experience in all aspects, including that of the International Criminal Police co-operation.