



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

G8 MINISTERIAL VIDEO CONFERENCE

Tuesday, December 15, 1998

Department of Justice

Room 2264

Washington, D.C.

P R O C E E D I N G S

(6:30 a.m.)

SECRETARY STRAW: Good morning, everybody. At least it's good morning for the United Kingdom. And welcome to this, the first ever, video conference on G8, Justice and Interior Ministers.

And I would like, at the outset, very much to thank Janet Reno, the United States Attorney General, for suggesting this idea and for helping to bring it to fruition. It is very nice to see you, Janet, down in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen, from my point of view.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Good morning.

SECRETARY STRAW: It is nice to see my good friend, Elizabeth Guigou, from France, as well as my other friends.

I am especially grateful to Shozaburo Nakamura and Mamoru Nishida, who stayed at work late to be with us. At least it's late by United Kingdom standards; and to the Janet Reno and the Canadian Deputy Minister, for getting up so early in the morning.

The G8 heads of government have given us their Interior and Justice Ministers, ambitious objectives for combating organized crime. The purpose of this conference, as we approach of the United Kingdom presidency and the start of the German presidency, is to enable us,

collectively, to take stock of progress and to agree on our objectives.

One of the advantages of keeping in touch by video link is the flexibility which it gives us on this occasion. We can take the opportunity to consider the recommendations which have emerged from the Conference on Terrorists which took place in London last week. But it is almost exactly a year ago since this group met in Washington to discuss the threat posed to our societies and to our economies by organized crime.

Looking back over the last 12 months, we can point to important achievements. We have begun to implement the vital but challenging action plan on high-tech crime. The network of 24-hour contact points, which our experts have designed, is now quietly in place, but in use.

I am delighted that some of our other partners in the European Union have also joined the network. And I hope it will grow further, with civilized cooperation between all members of the European Union.

I am delighted we have been joined by the Commissioner for this area, Anita Gradin.

Now, we have agreed to take tough measures to allow us to confiscate criminals' assets and to assist each other in so doing. And we each have to follow up the text that we agree internationally with actual work, which is why I published here in the United Kingdom proposals for strengthening both civil confiscation and civil forfeiture powers.

And we have all played an intellectual role in reviving and galvanizing the United Nations negotiations on a major new convention on transnational organized crime. In this and other ways, it has been another year where the G8 have been able to develop new ideas and creative solutions and, in this way, to influence thinking in the wider community. But there is a lot more to be done.

This conference is our opportunity to look at the year ahead and, in particular, for the run-up to this summit in Cologne.

Now, may I now go around the virtual table and ask each of you to make your initial statements. These should last no more than two minutes per country. And I think you all know, it is the initial session of the conference which is open to the press and television.

On a technical matter, could I ask your technicians to silence your microphones unless you are actually addressing the conference. Otherwise we could have some problems.

May I now call on Germany to speak, please.

MINISTER DAUBLER-GMELIN: I am very delighted this video conference is taking place today,

the first ever to have been convened by G8 ministers responsible for fighting transnational organized crime. I would like to thank you, Jack Straw, for organizing this conference, an idea originally put forward by our host at the ministerial conference held in Washington, in December 1997, Attorney General Janet Reno, the forum in which we are now meeting virtually.

The G8 is committed, as we know, amongst other things, to the fight against transnational organized crime. Our efforts to date have given us the overall mandate to identify existing instruments used for fighting this phenomenon, and they have also given us a mandate to develop and propose solutions in the work already being done in the numerous international forums.

It is no mean task which we have been interested. But, nevertheless, I believe we can be quite proud of the work already done. Principles drawn up the G8 have been adopted in other forums, like the European Union. However, as you pointed out, there is still a lot to be done.

The summit in Birmingham asked the Lyon Group to carry on with its work in certain specified areas. Essential work has been done by the U.K. presidency. As regards the future German presidency, let me assure you that despite the perilous responsibility of the European Union presidency, the German presidency and the government's move to Berlin in 1999, the ministries involved will be doing their utmost to continue the successful work of the G8 in their effort to fight transnational organized crime.

Just as under the present U.K. presidency, one of our main goals for the coming year will be to coordinate the views of the European Union and the G8 international forums which tackle transnational organized crime on specific issues relating to this type of crime. This will apply particularly as regards to work being done by the United Nations in drawing up a convention against transnational organized crime, as well as regards the envisaged additional protocols and the Council of Europe's activities directed at drafting a convention on cybercrime.

Both are important issues and, if resolved successfully, will give us new and efficient tools for our fight against transnational organized crime. I am looking forward -- let me say, we are looking forward -- here from Germany to today's discussion, and hope that we will have a fruitful conference, despite the fact that we do not have much time.

Thank you.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much, Minister.

I would like to now to call on Japan. And that will be followed by Italy.

Japan, please.

MINISTER NAKAMURA: Thank you very much, Mr. Straw. Good evening and good morning. And I thank you very much for the time.

I am Shozaburo Nakamura, Minister of Justice of Japan. It's a great honor and privilege for me to have an occasion to exchange views with my G8 counterpart ministers through the impressive technique of video conference.

It has always been my firm belief that the strengthening cooperation of our G8 partners in the area of fighting against organized crime is of permanent importance. I am sure that this meeting will be a great step forward in this direction. And I am looking forward to talking with you.

Thank you very much.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much, indeed.

I would now like to ask Italy, followed by Canada.

So, Italy, please.

MINISTER JERVOLINO RUSSO: First of all, I would like to join my colleagues in thanking Minister Straw for having offered us this interesting opportunity to meet. And it represents, from the technical point of view, a true novelty in the field of international relations.

I believe our cooperation today can find fresh forms of development in the new instruments provided by high-tech. This initiative is an occasion to reaffirm the commitment of the G8 Ministers of the Interior and Justice along the guidelines of last year's Washington conference, and lay the basis for further significant progress given to us by the comments of last May.

The globalization of organized crime is one of the major scourges undermining the peaceful lives of civilized society. We are witnessing now an ever-more intense integration among criminal syndicates of various nationalities, further fueled by the geopolitical changes which facilitate the movement of people, money and means.

This is often coupled with the support of high managerial skills, the strengthened development of production, the globalization of trade, the easy movement of financial flows, and the speed of communications, which direct criminals toward ever new fields of interest. The dangers we are facing show the growth of a growing transnational nature. And as such, it requires a constant mobilization of the international community.

This requires more intensive cooperation at the international level, capable of supporting

individual efforts, especially through the drawing up of compacts based on the strong political will to act together, exchanging ideas, experiences and assistance, for more effective operations.

Thank you.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much.

Could I just ask you if your colleague wishes to speak, or does that complete your contribution at this stage?

MINISTER JERVOLINO RUSSO: That completes our portion.

SECRETARY STRAW: I would like to now ask Japan whether Mr. Nishida wishes to say anything. I apologize if I cut him off before he could say anything.

MINISTER NISHIDA: Thank you, Mr. Straw and Ministers of Justice.

It is indeed a great experience that all the ministers concerned from the major nations of the world to get together and exchange their views simultaneously, making use of the advanced technology like this.

In my country, too, transnational organized crime has become a very serious problem. We are experiencing a rapid increase of such crimes as high-tech crime and crimes involving the smuggling of people by such groups as the Snake Heads.

It is a great pleasure for me to join this important meeting, as I firmly believe that this can set as a very good opportunity to strengthen our partnership and joint efforts to fight against these transborder crimes.

Thank you.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much, indeed.

I would now like to ask Canada to make its contribution.

Canada, please.

DEPUTY MINISTER ROSENBERG: Thank you.

My name is Morris Rosenberg. I am the Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney

General of Canada. With me is my colleague Jean T. Fournier, who is the Deputy Solicitor General. Ministers McLellan and McCauley regret that they are unable to take part in this video conference as a result of a two-day planning retreat of the Canadian Cabinet.

Canada is pleased with the progress of the Lyon Group. We thank the United Kingdom for its leadership in the past year, and we look forward to further progress under the German chairmanship in 1999.

The G8 is an ideal forum to discuss organized and transnational crime problems which are common to us all. Where we can develop common approaches, principles or practices, they will set a valuable precedent for our relations with countries outside the 8.

Since its creation at the 1995 Halifax Summit, the Lyon Group has served us well in considering some difficult issues. We are particularly encouraged by our progress in areas such as high-tech crime, mutual assistance, illicit firearms trafficking, the tracing and seizure of criminal assets, and law enforcement cooperation in dealing with border security and the traffic in human beings.

Last year's Birmingham Summit focused on measures for dealing with transnational organized crime. Canada has developed legislation and programs to deal with domestic elements of the problem. And we support the development of the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime.

We place a particularly high priority on key components of the Convention, such as high-tech crime, illicit firearms trafficking, the smuggling of economic migrants, and the enhancement of extradition and mutual legal assistance mechanisms. I will address these in more detail under our next agenda item.

The fight against terrorism, in many ways, parallels the fight against organized crime, particularly at the international level. Both require close cooperation between states. Without such cooperation, national boundaries can become a greater obstacles for governments than they are for terrorists.

As with organized crime, transnational terrorist activities require resources. Those involved must find ways to raise funds and to move them from one place to another without detection. The Deputy Solicitor General will be outlining courses of action presently under consideration in Canada later in the meeting.

Thank you.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much. Does that complete your opening, Canada?

DEPUTY MINISTER ROSENBERG: Yes, it does.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much.

May I now call on Russia, please, to make its contribution.

MINISTER STEPASHIN: I am going to welcome my old colleague, Mr. Straw, and my new colleagues, on behalf of the Minister of Internal Affairs, and welcome all participants in this conference.

The progress in the international relations in the last decade makes it easier for people from different countries to communicate. And at the same time it creates additional opportunities for the increased international crime.

It would be a mistake to try and identify where the criminal threat is higher or lower. The most grievous types of organized crime is drug trafficking and terrorism are equally dangerous for any country and for the entire world. This is a global threat, capable of undermining democratic and economic foundations of the world order and threaten the health and welfare of millions of people.

At this convention, I would like to stress especially the importance of international cooperation of our countries and its law enforcement agencies both in the form of the G8 and with the other regional and international organizations. It should be noted that in the areas of the fight against crime, nothing can disunite us. On the contrary, here we see eye to eye between all members of the G8.

I am confident that our joint efforts will certainly bring positive results, of which the citizens of our countries are awaiting. And I wish the participants of this conference every success.

Thank you.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much, indeed, Minister for Russia.

May I now invite France.

MME. GUIGOU: Thank you. I would like to first thank Attorney General Reno for organizing this conference.

SECRETARY STRAW: Could I ask your interpreter to move back a bit from the microphone.

MME. GUIGOU: I wanted to stress two points. First of all, I think it is essential to focus against

criminal organizations at the future convention which we are about to initiate, to define these organizations, not being able to charge all of their actions and activities. And I think it should be legal for us to dismantle them. And we must exert pressures against countries that do protect those mafia.

I am thinking particularly of actual centers which do refuse to cooperate in the request of legal aid are in fact accomplices of these offenders and associations. We must try even more to dismantle the networks of dirty money. And this is, by the way, an initiative against terrorism.

And I would thank you for your support, particularly you, Jack Straw, for your stand against organized crime of the G8. And we must continue to do this, to take action against high-tech crime.

I hope we will be able to do good work together on these difficult issues. Thank you.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much, indeed, Minister.

Now it gives me very great pleasure to ask Janet Reno, the United States Attorney General, to make her contribution. As everybody has acknowledged, this conference came into being on Janet Reno's initiative.

Janet.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you, Jack. And it's so good to be with all of you this morning. I think this is such an exciting opportunity, to use the wonderful opportunities of cybertools to bring us together. They offer us extraordinary challenges, which I know we will address today. But just in these 20 minutes, I think we can see the value of this means of communications.

The U.S. Government places a high priority on combatting international crime. In May of this year, President Clinton issued an international crime control strategy. This is a comprehensive plan for attacking international crime in all its forms. One of the key elements of this strategy is our work with other countries, and especially the G8.

I think it is so important to pursue these initiatives within the G8, because it gives us an opportunity to show other countries what can be done, and bring them into the network. I particularly look forward to our discussion today of international cybercrime. Using computers, criminals can now cross international borders so easily to commit financial frauds and to disrupt both government and public sector activities.

Our countries, I think, have evidenced the ability to work together. Our experts have made significant progress since our meeting last year, including, as you have pointed out, Jack, the



24-hour points of contact, which I think is working very well. But we have so much more to do. And we must not allow criminal minds and the pace of technology to outpace our law enforcement efforts.

I am also committed to continuing our joint efforts to ensure that criminals and their money enjoy no safe haven. We must continue to enhance our mechanisms for mutual legal assistance, and to use modern technologies such as what we are using today for taking testimony. We have just had an opportunity to do that, and it has worked so well.

Finally, I look forward to discussing ways to stop terrorists funding. Stopping the flow of money to terrorists must be one of our high priorities. I look forward to working with all of you in this coming year and during this conference this morning.

Thank you.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much, Janet.

By the way, I am taking my jacket off because one of the things you cannot share in is the weather over here in London. It may be mid-December, but it is wet, and about 20 degrees Celsius. That is 68 Fahrenheit, for you, Janet. It is generally horrible -- I think a consequence of global warming.

I would now like to call on Commissioner Anita Gradin, from the European Union.

COMMISSIONER GRADIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ministers.

I, too, would like to congratulate Jack Straw and Janet Reno for arranging this video conference. It is timely to have a discussion on the fight against organized crime and terrorists at this juncture. I am concerned by the dramatic increase in international criminal activity that we have seen over the last years. It poses a threat to the well-being of our citizens. It risks undermining the democratic and economic basis for our societies and the confidence in the rule of law.

Terrorism poses similar threats. Citizens rightly expect us to do our utmost in reversing this development. They want to live in a society where they know that public authorities are preventing and combating crime. And they are right. Our children and grandchildren should be assured to grow up in a safe and secure environment.

It is, for instance, unacceptable that children are being sold like cattle at the verge of the 21st century. That is why we urgently need to further develop our cooperation. It is only if we join forces that we succeed to combat international organized crime.

The close link between the efforts by the G8 and the action within the European Union is a good example of how we should work. It was in Halifax, in 1995, when we raised the alarm and launched the process of international cooperation against organized crime. The Union's efforts came along a year later. The cross-fertilization of ideas is now welcome in the future of our work.

Thank you very much.

SECRETARY STRAW: Thank you very much, indeed, Anita.

We are now going to move to item two of our agenda. And may I therefore ask each of you to ensure that reporters and television cameras are excluded so that we can continue our conference in private.

And I thank the media for their attendance.

(Whereupon, at 7:00 a.m., the public portion of the conference concluded.)