



*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



Statement by

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to the United Nations

on behalf of the CARICOM Community

to the

United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made
In the Implementation of the Programme of Action to
Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in
Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

June 26, 2006

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community. CARICOM congratulates you and your bureau on your election to guide the work of this important review conference and assure you of our full support and co-operation.

Mr. President,

CARICOM States are strongly committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July 2001. As stated by CARICOM delegations at the 2001 Conference and in other fora, the presence of small arms and light weapons in our region are continuously being used by those intent on destabilising the region, through criminal networks involved in the trafficking of drugs and weapons and as part of transnational organised crime. Such activities pose a dangerous challenge to our security infrastructure and undermine the economic and social fabric of our nations, through a rise in crime, particularly violent crime, in our societies.

This increasing crime problem in the CARICOM region is compounded by relatively easy access to and use of firearms. Indeed within CARICOM, illegal firearms have been described as the "single most significant instrument of crime leading to public fear." Starting from the previous decade and continuing up to the present, a number of Caribbean countries have experienced fairly high and steadily increasing gun use in the commission of violent crimes. CARICOM considers this as a regional problem which is closely linked to the illicit trafficking of narcotics trade as it has been seen that the demand and supply of firearms is closely linked to trends in the increase in drug crimes and increased activity in the drug trade.

Faced with this situation, CARICOM Governments have reaffirmed their commitment to regional and international efforts to control the spread of small arms and in this regard have welcomed the degrees of cooperation undertaken to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the bilateral, sub-regional, regional and international levels, including through the CARICOM Secretariat, the Organization of American States and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean which have provided assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action and other agreements aimed at controlling the spread and use of these weapons.

CARICOM member states have been seeking to implement their commitments at the national and regional levels as contained in the United Nations Programme of Action. We are of the view however, that much more needs to be done at the global level to ensure effective implementation of the Programme of Action. We consider the Programme of Action as an important first step in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons but there is need for further action to address gaps in existing policy and for implementation at all levels. To this end,

the Programme of Action must be augmented by commitments to establish transfer controls in producer countries, to regulate brokering, as well as to facilitate the timely and reliable marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. We also continue to call on producer States to exercise greater levels of scrutiny of end-user certificates and border controls.

Mr. President,

CARICOM faces a number of challenges in the implementation of the Programme of Action at both the national and regional levels. It is within this context that CARICOM has been urging the provision of increased international financial and technical assistance and support so as to assist capacity building in the region.

For many CARICOM countries, there is need for a comprehensive review of national legislation, regulations and administrative procedures to implement fully the measures contained in the Programme of Action particularly with respect to the possession and use of Small Arms and Light Weapons and to control the spread of illicit weapons. In addition, the degree, accuracy and consistency in statistical record keeping and intelligence activities related to illicit small arms and light weapons varies considerably across the CARICOM region and there is need to strengthen data collection. There is also need for increased coordination of intelligence activities and the strengthening of national and regional law enforcement intelligence structures.

As such, technical and financial assistance and support are important for capacity building in law enforcement capability in CARICOM states to improve customs operations and to have access to adequate equipment and technology and facilities as well as proper institutional arrangements so as to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. This is of particular relevance to CARICOM since we neither produce small arms and light weapons nor import them on a large scale. CARICOM states have benefited to a large extent from bilateral cooperation projects which are aimed at strengthening border security and customs control. CARICOM governments have also been conducting education and public awareness campaigns against the illicit use of small arms and light weapons.

In underscoring the importance of a regional response to counter the challenges faced CARICOM Heads of State and Government have created a regional security centre located in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago which is responsible for CARICOM's regional security strategy. This mechanism is part of the approach to have a shared partnership among CARICOM countries on matters related to security and the prevention of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Some CARICOM countries have also found it useful to develop partnerships between governmental agencies and with civil society. Civil society has also been useful in spearheading programmes for victim assistance as well as in demand reduction. For us in the region however, the problem has been one of

supply and we have constantly underscored the need for greater attention to be paid to the import, export and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

CARICOM member states remain committed to the implementation of the *International Instrument to Identify and trace in a timely and reliable manner illicit small arms and light weapons*. We were disappointed that the instrument was not made legally binding so as to allow for more robust action in dealing with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We express the hope that efforts will be made in the future to allow for a legally binding arrangement governing marking and tracing.

CARICOM is interested in the provision of increased international assistance and cooperation in implementation of the international instrument. For the region, areas requiring assistance include the centralisation and computerisation of records, assistance in marking confiscated unmarked weapons, assistance in tracing and confiscating weapons, intelligence sharing and policy design and execution.

CARICOM supports international action in dealing with the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons. There should be improved regulation for firearms dealers, the strengthening of national record-keeping requirements and the application of more rigorous standards for arms brokers and other traders of small arms and light weapons. We look forward to the early convening of meetings of the group of Governmental Experts to deal with this.

Mr. President,

The new and increased levels of crime are forcing CARICOM countries to rethink their national and regional strategies in ways in which policing, crime prevention and control are addressed. It is clear that in spite of our best efforts, the capacity of CARICOM countries to deal with this problem has been overtaxed. While we have been trying to curtail the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons from a regional perspective through a regional security arrangement, these efforts need to be bolstered by increased action at the international level. We therefore hope that this meeting will be able to send a clear message as to the action required by the international community in improving the implementation of the UN Programme of Action as no state or region alone can prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

In this regard, CARICOM strongly believes that it is necessary to establish a comprehensive follow-up mechanism as a result of this Review Conference. As highlighted in the May 2006 Declaration of La Antigua, Guatemala agreed to by all states of the Latin American and Caribbean region, there is a need for:

- 1) A follow-up mechanism resulting from the Review Conference to periodically review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the outcome documents adopted by this and subsequent conferences.

- 2) The convening of a Conference no later than 2011 to review progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action.
- 3) The convening of a meeting of States on a biennial basis to consider national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of action.

Finally, Mr. President,

CARICOM reiterates the urgent need for the international community to take concerted action to eradicate the deadly use and trade in illicit small arms and light weapons that contributes so much to human tragedy.

Thank you.