STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

TO THE

FIRST COMMITTEE
THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS

64TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 20TH OCTOBER 2009

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Mr. Chairman,

The Jamaican delegation aligns itself with the statement made yesterday by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. As we emphasized in the general debate, Jamaica fully endorses the recent positive developments which have taken place on the global disarmament and nonproliferation agenda, and which have inspired new hope and a renewed desire, as evidenced throughout the deliberations in this Committee, to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction from our planet. At this juncture, our desire is for similar global efforts to stimulate changes in the area of conventional weapons, particularly the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, even as we, the global community of nations intensify strategies to combat terrorism.

As we concentrate our efforts in those directions, there is an equally urgent need, a need which implores us to confront the havoc being wreaked by conventional arms, particularly the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW), on our societies. This is not a threat Mr. Chairman; the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has become a persistent and intractable problem for many developing countries like Jamaica.

Coordinated decisive action to curb the illicit trade in these weapons will be essential, and I dare say critical, if we are to arrive at a permanent solution. The uncontrolled access and proliferation of these illegal weapons and ammunitions pose severe humanitarian and socio economic challenges to many States, particularly developing countries.

Within the Jamaican context, there is a causal nexus between drug trafficking, the illicit proliferation of small arms and the presence of criminal gangs. This connection has given rise to a highly organized criminal network which is supported by various sophisticated criminal organizations within and outside our region and the development of a subculture that glorifies violence and hypes gun ownership.

Since the year 2000, the Jamaican police have recovered 5,284 assorted weapons and over 127,300 assorted rounds of ammunitions. These seizures have had little impact on the escalating gun-related crimes to the extent that the Jamaican Government continues to reallocate already scarce resources from the national development budget to tackle its far-reaching effects.

Mr. Chairman, the Government has not stood idly by, as over the past 5 years a raft of crime fighting measures have been implemented, aimed specifically at tackling the import, transit and export of narcotic drugs and illicit firearms and ammunitions. These include: the establishment of a Counter Narcotics and Major
Crimes Taskforce (Kingfish) focusing on the key players in the illegal drug trade, highly organized criminal gangs and traffickers in small arms; the passage of a Proceeds of Crime Act to confiscate the assets of dealers in the illicit firearms and drug trades; the establishment of an inter-Ministerial Committee on Drugs for effective coordination in tackling Jamaica’s drug problem utilizing a comprehensive approach which addresses both the demand and supply side of the drug equation; the consolidation of all intelligence agencies into one National Intelligence Bureau, a move designed to improve the efficiency capabilities of intelligence gathering and with the assistance of French, US and UK navy officials, we have increased our surveillance capabilities along the island’s coastline.

We take this opportunity Mr. Chairman, to commend the work of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in the area of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Collaboration with the Centre remains crucial in our efforts to confront the challenges posed by the illegal weapons. Jamaica endorses its work and looks forward to continuing the very fruitful engagement which should continue for the benefit of the entire region.

We take this opportunity also, to express appreciation for the tremendous support given to the Government of Jamaica by the UNDP through its offices in Kingston, as we grapple with the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica continues to call for the full and prompt implementation of the 2001 “Programme of Action (POA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects” and for the requisite assistance to be afforded to those States which are facing difficulties in implementing its recommendations.

The inability by many developing countries to effectively implement the POA was a recurring theme at the Third Biennial Meeting of States (BMS-3) to consider the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action (POA). Having agreed that the primary responsibility for solving the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects falls on all States, our call therefore is for closer international cooperation to assist such developing countries in a timely manner, with the satisfactory implementation of their commitments. We look forward to the upcoming BMS-4 in 2010 where we hope we can build on the accomplishments of the past.
Mr. Chairman,

We continue to call for the establishment of a system for the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons and that ammunition is incorporated into the POA as a matter for serious consideration and action.

Indeed, one very important element in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons will be the development and adoption of an Arms Trade Treaty and in this regard, we firmly support current efforts towards the development of such a treaty, to impose strict controls on the trade in these weapons. Our preference is for its completion in the not too distant future. An Arms Trade Treaty should include, inter alia, the export, re-export, import, transfer, transit and trans-shipment of all conventional arms, including components, ammunition and the technology for their manufacture.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.