STATEMENT

By

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Permanent Mission of the Republic of

Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations

on behalf of

the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

on

Cluster 3 Conventional Weapons
in the First Committee
of the
65th session of the
United Nations General Assembly

NEW YORK, October 19, 2010
Mr. Chairman
I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM, on the subject of conventional weapons.

The relatively low cost of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, their portability, and ease of use, result in these categories of weapons posing a grave threat to international peace and security in all regions of the world. Their indiscriminate nature has caused severe pain and suffering especially among innocent civilian populations long after the conflict has ended, and the destructive effects of their use are also felt in those countries that are not in a state of conflict.

CARICOM supports the conclusion of international legal instruments that are geared towards controlling the proliferation or elimination of certain types of conventional weapons which cause pain and suffering to those not engaged in active combat. Consequently, we welcome the entry into force on 1st August of this year, of the Cluster Munitions Convention (the Convention). The entry into force of this Convention provides the international community with another vehicle dedicated to the elimination of the use of one of the world’s most destructive types of conventional weapons.

Our concern over the indiscriminate use of certain types of conventional weapons has led some Member States to become adherents to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and their Protocols.

CARICOM therefore welcomes the recent action taken by Antigua and Barbuda to become adherents to this Convention and its Protocols I, II and IV, as well to the Cluster Munitions Convention. Other Member States are currently examining the Convention with a view to accession at a later stage.

Mr. Chairman
Notwithstanding our support for the efforts of the international community to reduce or eradicate the indiscriminate use of certain types of conventional weapons, for CARICOM Member States, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and ammunition, constitute a clear and present threat to our long term social and economic development. This illegal trade which is cross border in character is linked to other aspects of transnational organized crime, including illegal drug-trafficking and money laundering. It also places an inordinate burden on our resources, as well as the ability of our judicial and law enforcement authorities to confront this menace.

The fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and ammunition, goes beyond a security threat, it is a fight for the survival of our way of life; a fight for our very existence.
Our efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are compounded by the fact that we have to divert limited financial resources from areas such as health, education and other socio-economic development issues, to combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. This situation is untenable for states which are neither manufacturers nor major importers of small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Chairman
CARICOM Member States continue to expend maximum effort to ensure the full implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (“PoA”), which remains the guiding international mechanism for combating this illicit activity.

To this end, we participated actively in the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the PoA, and fully endorse the contents of the report which was adopted by consensus. We believe that the activities outlined in ‘The Way Forward’ segment of the report, provide an important road map for future activity leading to the 2012 Review Meeting.

The next two years will witness a number of important discussions relating to the implementation of the PoA and efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. CARICOM is fully committed to engaging fully in these discussions, and therefore encourages all States to participate in an effective and cooperative manner. This is imperative if we are to realize our goal of reducing the harmful effects associated with this illegal trade.

Mr. Chairman
Another measure which is vital to our efforts aimed at achieving our objective is the full implementation of the International Instrument on Marking and Tracing (“the Instrument”). CARICOM reiterates that the effectiveness of the Instrument is severely hampered due to the fact that it is not legally binding.

Stockpile management of both small arms and light weapons, and ammunition, is another important component in combating the illicit trade in these weapons, and eradicating their deadly effect on innocent civilian populations. We have taken note of the efforts being undertaken by the Office of Disarmament Affairs (“ODA”) to develop and implement international ammunition technical guidelines. We look forward to their full completion by the end of this year, as outlined in the Secretary-General’s Report, contained in document A/65/153.

Mr. Chairman,
At the First Session of the Preparatory Commission, held in July of this year, Member States engaged in substantive discussions on the elements and scope of a
comprehensive, legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We commend all States for their constructive engagement in these discussions.

CARICOM was encouraged by the expressions of support for the elaboration of a strong, effective and non-discriminatory treaty. The challenge for us leading to the 2012 Conference on the ATT is to ensure that our words are transmitted into action, and that we get the support of all those states which are yet to be convinced of the importance of this objective.

CARICOM will continue to work inter-sessionally to formulate its position so that a future Arms Trade Treaty includes within its scope, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. It is our hope that the instrument would also provide for an effective implementation regime which would contain provisions for monitoring and verification.

Mr. Chairman
The effect of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and ammunition, and consequently armed violence throughout the region is not an abstract concept. Gun crime is unfortunately, a part of our everyday existence.

In order to combat this scourge and minimize its impact on our society, CARICOM Member States have engaged in joint activities with our bilateral partners to strengthen our capability to tackle this problem, particularly in the areas of border management.

At the regional level, CARICOM Member States have established the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and the Council of Ministers responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSOLE), to provide a joint, coordinated response to address the crime and security challenges facing the region. IMPACS is also working on an initiative for the design, development and implementation of a regional ballistics information framework. This would enable the authorities to share information on identifying and tracing guns used in crime through ballistic identification. This is in keeping with the commitment of CARICOM Governments to ensuring a safe and secure environment for all its citizens.

In the war against the proliferation of illegal weapons, we recognize the importance of partnerships. Consequently, we also commend the work done by the regional office of UN-LIREC in association with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in hosting a successful workshop on stockpile management and disposal last July. At the hemispheric level we continue to work with the Organization of American States (OAS) to acquire equipment relating to marking and the requisite training of officials.

Our individual and collective efforts have been achieving some success. We have been engaged in multifaceted, multi-sectoral responses to combating the challenges posed by
crime and violence. In order to translate these small successes into long-term gains, we need the continued support of the international community to ensure that there are common international standards and procedures that will eliminate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ammunition. CARICOM therefore calls on all Member States to continue to work with us in this unique forum of the United Nations to give true meaning to the words compromise and flexibility to ensure that all measures aimed at eliminating the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, and their ammunition become a reality.

I thank you.