STATEMENT BY

MRS. ANGELLA COMFORT
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

TO THE

FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Mr. Chairman
Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Committee on the Debate on Conventional Weapons. Jamaica associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished delegation on behalf of CARICOM.

Conventional weapons, in the form of anti-personnel mines, small arms or light weapons are a daily threat to human life. On any given day, across the world, more innocent lives are claimed by conventional weapons, more than the lives lost in the current theaters of war.

In recognition of the adverse humanitarian impact caused by this category of weapons, and the need to eliminate their indiscriminate effects on humanity, Jamaica has in recent years, become a state party to the CCW and its Protocols. Jamaica is also a signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. While we have not yet ratified the CCM, we hope to do so at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Chairman
Of critical importance to my delegation are matters related to small arms and light weapons. For Jamaica, a country which does not manufacture either weapons or ammunition, the dangers to human life and social stability, posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the illicit transfer of these categories of weapons and their ammunition, are an everyday reality.

The recently released UNODC 2011 Global Study on Homicide, indicates that within the Caribbean, a subset of the Americas region - the region with the second highest global homicide rate, close to 70% of annual homicides are committed with a firearm. For Jamaica, the impact of the high levels of crime and violence threaten our advances toward reaching our millennium development targets and negatively impact our social and economic development.

These underlying factors have driven our engagement at the international level with respect to the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate, the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons in all their aspects. To this end, we look forward to participating in the review conference to be held in 2012. For Jamaica the 2012 Review Conference should provide an opportunity for more than an evaluation of the implementation of the PoA. If we are to realize the true value of the PoA, we must explore ways to enhance its implementation, in particular for small states with porous borders. It is also our hope that the Review Conference will provide an opportunity to address all important issues within the PoA, including border-related issues. This we believe would be a tangible outcome of the PoA Review Conference.
We also look forward to a positive decision being taken at the 2012 PoA Review on the convening of future Meetings of Governmental Experts within the framework of the PoA. The first of these meetings which was held in May of this year was an innovative approach, one that bore significant results. We reiterate our thanks the Chairman and his team for their valuable work.

Jamaica has also continued to be engaged in the preparatory process leading up to the 2012 ATT Diplomatic Conference. As we have stated throughout the preparatory process, our goal is for a legally binding, objective, non-discriminatory treaty, that establishes the highest possible international standards for the transfer conventional weapons including small arms, light weapons and their ammunition.

Jamaica does not view the ATT as panacea, and overnight, we will rid the world of the millions of illicit small arms and light weapons. We do however see the ATT as a necessary element in international efforts to stem the illegal flow of these weapons across borders, into the hands of criminal organisations.

While there remains much work to be done leading to next year's conference, we remain confident that under the continued, able guidance of Ambassador Garcia Moritán, we will bridge the gaps that remain among delegations.

Mr. Chairman
At the national level, within our limited resources, we continue to implement our obligations under the various international and regional agreements to which Jamaica is a party. On the legislative front, we are currently in the process of drafting more comprehensive legislation that will strengthen Jamaica’s capacity to combat the flows of illicit arms into the island, regulate brokering activities, and strengthening the regulatory framework. A comprehensive small arms policy is also currently being developed.

In addition, Jamaica has introduced the Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System (VACIS) at the Kingston Transshipment Port, which is used for the detection of illegal weapons; and teams from the Jamaican Police and Defense Forces continue to patrol our territorial waters to prevent the smuggling of weapons and illegal drugs. These efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms light weapons and their ammunition has been assisted through the support of many of our bilateral partners.

At the regional level, Jamaica and its CARICOM partners are working together within the context of the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security, CARICOM-IMPACS. Jamaica is supportive of and participates actively in regional efforts to harmonize legislation with a focus on strong penalties to deter the illicit use, sale and possession of firearms.
Mr. Chairman
The coming year promises to be one of long-awaited and much needed progress for the conventional weapons agenda. We have a moral obligation to lay the foundation for a better future for all. Advancing progress on the conventional weapons agenda will significantly contribute to meeting these lofty but achievable goals.

I thank you.