STATEMENT BY

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OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE
68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON

ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS (ITEMS 89 TO 107)

NEW YORK
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Mr. Chairman

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM): Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

At the outset, we wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of the full cooperation of our delegations, as we address the important work of this Committee. We also wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to Ambassador Desra Percaya of Indonesia who presided over this Committee at the sixty-seventh session.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Angela Kane, and the staff of her Office for their commendable work.

A few days ago, our leaders gathered here for the General Debate under the theme “The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage”, as the international community commences deliberations on the crafting of a new global development agenda to replace the MDGs that will expire in under 1000 days. These discussions, which are of high priority for the Small-Island Developing States of CARICOM, served as a powerful reminder that peace and security are prerequisites to development.

There is no greater duty to be performed by the United Nations than the maintenance of international peace and security, thereby creating a stable and peaceful enabling environment for lasting development. The progressive reduction of armaments and the achievement of the goal of general and complete disarmament are of utmost significance in realizing these objectives. This confers particular importance to the work of the First Committee and injects a sense of urgency into our deliberations.

We are, however, mindful that progress in the area of disarmament continues to be less than ideal and if we were to succumb to a pessimistic view, we would say that our progress to date has been discouraging. The reports before us record yet another year of unfilled commitments, stalled action and dissension on all matters concerning nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As the Secretary-General’s Report on the Work of the Organisation (A/68/1) pointedly states: “nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain high priorities. Yet there are no disarmament negotiations, no fissile material treaty, no entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.”

We acknowledge the complexity of the security environment impacting the disarmament agenda. The challenges of international terrorism, the rise of non-state actors, new proliferation threats, the persistence of conflicts particularly in the Middle East and of some regional rivalries and disputes, which continually raise the spectre of war, have complicated our disarmament efforts. In the face of these challenges and the pervading climate of mistrust we cannot allow inertia to take root. We must find new ways to minimize the daunting challenges and continue to pursue disarmament efforts relentlessly, with perseverance and political will.
Arms Trade Treaty

Mr. Chairman, this political will was observed last April when, through concerted action, the General Assembly adopted the landmark Arms Trade Treaty. CARICOM States are pleased to begin this 68th Session, with the knowledge that 113 Member States have signed the Treaty since its opening for signature on 3rd June, and seven have ratified the instrument to date.

We take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the coalition of governments, international organisations and civil society that succeeded in delivering the ATT, as well as to Ambassador Peter Wolcott of Australia and Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan of Argentina, who ably led the long and arduous process of negotiations.

CARICOM countries have remained firm in our conviction that this Treaty can contribute significantly to reducing the suffering of many of our citizens and countless peoples around the world, especially women and children, who are living daily under the deadly and devastating impact of the unregulated trade in conventional weapons. This conviction underpinned our active engagement throughout the negotiating process. We are also proud of the fact that thirteen of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community have signed the Treaty and that three are among the seven States to have ratified to date.

Our delegations are committed to working with our partners, including civil society to ensure the early ratification, entry into force and full implementation of the Treaty. International cooperation, particularly the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building, is of vital importance during the ratification and implementation phase and we are therefore gratified at the ongoing efforts in this regard. We have long held the position that the real success of the ATT lies in its effective implementation. To this end, we strongly supported and promoted the inclusion in the Treaty of a Secretariat to oversee its implementation. We, therefore, reiterate the desire and readiness of our fellow Member State - Trinidad and Tobago- to host the ATT Secretariat and request the support of the global community for this candidature.

Small arms

Mr. Chairman, the illicit trade in small arms and their associated ammunition continues to be a major concern for CARICOM. These weapons continue to fuel armed violence in the region and undermine the sustainable development of our countries. We, therefore, welcome recent positive developments in fighting this phenomena, including the outcome of the 2012 Review Conference and the inclusion of small arms and light weapons and ammunition in the Arms Trade Treaty.

We also take special note of the recent High-Level Meeting of the Security Council on Small Arms and the adoption of a resolution on this matter. This has brought renewed focus and action to an issue that has significant impact on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including sexual violence in conflict, as well as on UN peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions.
At the same time, we are mindful of the need to sustain the political will and momentum to achieve significant progress in our efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. Our delegations are convinced that emphasis should be placed on strengthened international assistance and cooperation, border controls, the sharing of best practices, and that full account should be taken of the link between security and development. As such, we look forward to the convening of the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms in June 2014, which we hope will strengthen global action.

In the Caribbean, concerted efforts are being made at the national and community levels to curb the proliferation of illicit small arms and ammunitions. Bilateral, regional and international cooperation initiatives are, however, crucial if we are to make any meaningful headway. In this context, we acknowledge and commend the valuable work being undertaken by the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America (UN-LiREC), which supports and assists CARICOM states with capacity-building measures, including in the critical areas of stockpile management and destruction operations. It is hoped that the necessary resources will be found to continue its work.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of full and verifiable nuclear disarmament is of importance to all States regardless of their size or military or economic status. Simply put, the implications of nuclear catastrophe are troubling to all States because of the capacity for global annihilation that the arsenals of nuclear weapons represent. We remain convinced that it is only through the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction that international peace and security can be guaranteed.

Our delegations therefore call on Nuclear Weapons States to respond to the unqualified desire of the overwhelming majority of states for prompt and effective measures to pursue the goal of full and verifiable disarmament in a time bound framework, and as a matter of urgency. As we prepare for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, we join in calling on these States to enhance transparency on all nuclear weapons as an essential confidence-building measure and stress the need for the full implementation of the concrete actions leading to nuclear disarmament in the conclusions and recommendations adopted at the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.

Recent efforts to renew momentum and generate greater public awareness to move disarmament efforts forward are encouraging. In this context, we welcome the recent historic General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, which was both timely and opportune in generating momentum around the issue. Our delegations support calls made during the meeting for the convening of a follow-up high-level international conference in five years, as well as for commencement of negotiations on a Convention banning nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman, our delegations consider the NPT as the bedrock of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime; and we make no distinction between nuclear disarmament and non-
proliferation. In this regard, we urge the Nuclear Weapons States to fully comply with their obligations and commitments under Article VI of the NPT. By the same token, while underscoring the right of all states to peaceful uses of nuclear technology in accordance with Article IV of the NPT, we insist that this right must be accompanied by the commitment and obligation to comply with the verification and safeguard provisions of the IAEA.

We reiterate the importance of the universality of the Treaty and call on the states currently outside the NPT framework to accede to the Treaty and place their facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

A practical step in building confidence in the non-proliferation regime is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free-zones. The NWFZ in Latin America and the Caribbean under the Treaty of Tlateloco has served us well in our region. However, we urge the nuclear weapons states to withdraw the reservations made based on the interpretative declarations they issued when they signed the Additional Protocols to the Treaty. This would serve to eliminate the possible use of nuclear weapons within the region.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free-zones should be replicated in other parts of the world where none currently exist. We are, therefore, disappointed that the Conference mandated for 2012 on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons was not held. We urge all parties to take the steps necessary to assure the early convening of this Conference. This is of particular urgency as the climate of unabated political tension and insecurity in the Middle East continue to require the urgent attention of the international community, given the serious threat posed to the preservation of regional and international peace and security.

In tandem with the NPT, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty constitutes a major plank in the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We welcome recent ratification by Chad, Guinea Bissau and Iraq bringing us closer to the entry into force of the Treaty. Success of the Treaty depends on its universality and verifiability and in this context, we urge ratification by the remaining Annex II countries, to enable its entry into force.

For us in the CARICOM region, the CTBT is not only an instrument aimed at promoting the disarmament agenda but one which has tremendous capacity, through the CTBTO’s programme of assistance to develop capacity in the areas of seismography and early warning signals to detect earthquakes and tsunamis.

A ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and explosives is an important objective and essential prerequisite for an effective non-proliferation regime. Our delegations were, therefore, pleased last year to join efforts in this Committee to go beyond the impasse within the CD and supported the creation of a group of experts to recommend steps to advance FMCT negotiations. We look forward to the group commencing its work next year.
Humanitarian impact of nuclear detonation

Mr. Chairman, we are deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation, intentional or unintentional. The consequences would be global, long term and truly calamitous for human health, our environment, our development, security and food resources, which underscores the urgent need for a ban on these weapons. We, therefore, welcome growing global attention to this matter, including the first ever meeting of governments to discuss the issue, which was held earlier this year in Oslo. Our delegations look forward to participating in the follow-up conference that will be held in Mexico in February 2014, which we hope will provide yet another opportunity for governments and civil society to mobilize efforts to ban these deadly weapons.

Nuclear security and safety

Our delegations remain supportive of actions to improve nuclear security and safety. The Fukushima D Aichi incident has served as a wake up call reminding of the importance of ensuring the highest standards of nuclear safety and assuring effective and well coordinated responses to nuclear incidents. Bearing this in mind, CARICOM reiterates its strong opposition to the shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. Notwithstanding the assurances given with regard to these shipments, we remain concerned about the devastating and long-term impact that any incidents relating to such shipments could have on the region. The dialogue, within the context of the IAEA, on measures to strengthen international cooperation in nuclear, radiation and waste safety is timely and important.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a threat to global peace and security. CARICOM believes that access by non-state actors to WMDs is best avoided through the total elimination of these weapons, as well as the strict adherence by the international community to the three non-proliferation regimes: the NPT, CWC and BWC.

As States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, CARICOM Member States condemn unreservedly the recent use in Syria of chemical weapons, which is a gross contravention of international law including the 1925 Geneva Protocol. We call upon all States Parties to uphold the treaties, which are widely accepted as forming part of customary international law.

Mr. Chairman, CARICOM has benefited from the support of the IAEA to strengthen the capacity of countries in our region through the sharing of best practices and transfer of technology; from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in providing specialized training in emergency response to deliberate or accidental use of chemical agents; and from the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs and the BWC Implementation Support Unit to improve detection and diseases surveillance capabilities in the region; all in support of our national and regional efforts to fulfill our obligations under Security Council resolution 1540.
We further welcome the efforts of the Office of the CARICOM Regional Coordinator for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1540, in its efforts at sensitizing officials within CARICOM through its various workshops on responses to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) emergencies.

**Cluster Munitions**

Mr. Chairman, in the three years since its entry into force, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has proven to be a key component of the broader normative framework for the protection of civilians. CARICOM continues to support the aims of the Convention and is working to ensure that all its Members become States Parties to the Convention as soon as possible. We look forward to the Fifth Meeting of States Parties which will take place in Costa Rica in 2014.

**Women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control**

Mr. Chairman, CARICOM attaches high importance to the participation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and in particular as it relates to the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict. We are fully supportive of the annual resolution originally piloted by Trinidad and Tobago on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and look forward to its adoption this year by consensus as in previous years. We also welcome the Secretary-General’s first report (A/68/166) on this important initiative and take special note of the actions being taken at the national and regional levels, as well as within the UN system to promote the participation of women. The inclusion of strong provisions for gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty is of particular significance.

**Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, we find ourselves with a fortuitous opportunity to re-direct our dialogue and to jump start our negotiations to make meaningful progress on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, bearing in mind that without peace and security the international community’s efforts to secure meaningful socio-economic development will be stymied.

We therefore welcome the report of the Open-ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations established at the 67th Session of the General Assembly and hope that the contributions of the Group will assist efforts aimed at breaking the sixteen year-deadlock in the multilateral disarmament machinery.

As we deliberate during the coming weeks, let us keep at the forefront of our actions the Secretary-General’s words of wisdom at last week’s High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament that “success [in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation] would strengthen international peace and security, free up vast and much-needed resources for social and economic development, advance the rule of law” and “remove a layer of fear that clouds all of human existence”.

I thank you.