STATEMENT

by

H.E. Camillo Gonsalves
Ambassador & Permanent Representative
PERMANENT MISSION OF SAINT VINCENT & THE GRENADINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
(CARICOM)

in the

Fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects

Agenda Item 7 (a) The establishment, where appropriate, of regional and sub regional mechanisms with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons across borders, including trans-border customs cooperation and networks for information sharing among law enforcement, border and customs control agencies.

June 14, 2010

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Mr. Chairman,

I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of the fourteen member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). At the outset I wish to congratulate you on your assumption to the Chair of this fourth Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We are confident that under your wise and able leadership the work of this meeting will be guided to a successful outcome. Congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM aligns itself to the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons is one of high priority for CARICOM member states. Our region considers the Programme of Action as an important multilateral mechanism in the fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and we remain fully committed to its implementation. While neither manufacturers nor large importers of these weapons, CARICOM continues to face increasing challenges arising from the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its spin off effects of crime and gun violence.

The problem of illicit small arms and light weapons within CARICOM is in no small way linked with the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and related
transnational organised crime. The 2007 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, co authored with the World Bank and entitled “Crime, Violence and Development: Trends, Costs and Policy Options in the Caribbean” places the issue of drugs and crime at the centre of the region’s crime and security problems and reminds us that crime and violence are also development issues. The scourge of crime and violence which has been visited upon our societies as a result of such illicit trafficking has caused significant loss of life and human suffering and it continues to pose a serious threat to the safety and security of our citizens and development. The region has always placed great emphasis on the socio economic well being of our people, thus diverting resources from education, health care and overall development in order to tackle the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its related activities places even greater burdens on our governments in efforts at improving the socio economic development of the region.

Mr. Chairman,

As regards today’s agenda item, CARICOM welcomes the non paper prepared by Mr. Frederico Perazza of Uruguay, and circulated as A/CONF.192/BMS/2010/ WP.1. We believe that this paper contains some valuable elements for our discussions today. We fully support section IV of this paper which highlights several areas where this meeting can suggest further action on this issue, in particular CARICOM deems of importance the urging of enhanced practical cooperation among the institutions responsible for effective border control.

While many of CARICOM’s member states do not share borders, our borders nonetheless remain highly porous. Our governments therefore remain conscious of
the need for increasingly enhanced measures for strengthened controls at our land, sea and air borders and we continue to institute cooperative and information sharing mechanisms to further such controls. On this note, CARICOM welcomes international mechanisms geared at promoting the surveillance and protection of the sea from all forms of illicit activities, such as the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The majority of the Member States in the region depend on their large maritime space for their economic development primarily through the tourism and fisheries industries. Thus, the proliferation of illegal activities such as the trans-shipment of illicit products via our land and sea space would have a devastating impact on our vulnerable economies and societies.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM member states see regional cooperation as vital to addressing security challenges including those related to the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In this respect and in the implementation of its regional commitments to the Programme of Action, CARICOM has made security a fourth pillar of the movement.

The region is committed to regional cooperation which includes the exchange of information, technical assistance, joint exercises, training and capacity building. In 2005 CARICOM Heads agreed to the establishment of a regional framework for the management of crime and security. This framework includes a Council of Ministers with responsibility for national security and law enforcement and an implementation agency for crime and security, known as IMPACS which is also the Region’s point of contact on the UN Programme of Action.
Fully cognizant of the necessity for collaboration within the region on its security concerns and of the limited resources and capacity to respond to the threats posed by the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, in 2008, four CARICOM states, namely Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago signed the CARICOM Maritime and Airspace Security Cooperation Agreement. This agreement addresses among other issues, the illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition.

The region has also embarked on a facility intended to more effectively share information among customs and other law enforcement officials. Also in 2008, CARICOM IMPACS issued a request for a proposal for the design, development and implementation of a regional integrated ballistic information network which will facilitate the identification and tracking of guns used in crime through ballistic identification and constant sharing of information among CARICOM member states.

Some of our member states have spent large sums of money in the procurement of vessels and aircraft to fight cross border crime and it is to be noted that as members of the OAS, all CARICOM states have signed the inter American convention against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, known as CIFTA.

While we have made some steps in enhanced regional cooperation in the area of security, challenges remain. Among some of the challenges faced by our region include the lack of the required technological and human resources and institutional capacity to adequately patrol and monitor our borders. There is also
the need for technical assistance and training for personnel who address the issue
of border controls.

Before I conclude Mr. Chairman, CARICOM again reiterates its call for the
reopening of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Barbados as a
critical element in demonstrating the commitment of the United Nations system to
assisting the region in its efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light
weapons, drug trafficking and transnational organised crime.

I thank you.