STATEMENT BY

MS. SHORNA-KAY RICHARDS
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA

ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

IN THE
FIRST COMMITTEE
ON
THEMATIC CLUSTER 4:
CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

28TH OCTOBER 2013
UNITED NATIONS

Please check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen (14) Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM is pleased to participate in today’s First Committee debate on Conventional Weapons and in so doing, submits that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects threatens peace, safety, security and stability at national, regional and international levels.

Mr. Chairman,

On numerous occasions in this Committee, CARICOM has advanced, that despite the fact that Member States of the region are neither manufacturers nor large importers of conventional weapons, we have not escaped the devastating impact of the illegal trade in small arms, light weapons and ammunition. In CARICOM’s view; these are the “weapons of mass destruction”. They represent a relentless force which not only threatens the sustainable development of many States in our region, but also undermines the very fabric of our societies. The control, prevention and eradication of the illicit trade in these armaments remain, therefore, a top regional priority.

On 4th July 2011, CARICOM Heads of Government adopted the CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons as the regional mechanism in the collective effort to combat the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition. In so doing, CARICOM Heads of Government noted, with grave concern, that the widespread availability of illegal guns has fostered an alarming rise in murders and gun violence throughout the region.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM has developed a targeted approach within the framework of the 2013 CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy, an important component in our arsenal to fight the war against crime. We look forward to the assistance of the United Nations in its implementation, including through the long awaited re-opening of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Barbados.

Developments within the last few years within CARICOM, including the commissioning of the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) as well as the Council of Ministers Responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSOLE), in addition to security being declared as the Fourth Pillar of CARICOM, have demonstrated an unprecedented level of cooperation on regional security issues.
These milestones and improvements in the management of CARICOM’s crime and security agenda have brought greater focus, responsiveness, integration and functional cooperation to the Community’s approach to security.

IMPACS has put in place several measures to address the effects of the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons in our regions. We have also taken steps to establish a newly-created Regional Ballistic Integrated Information Network (RIBIN), which, once fully implemented, will provide critical support to authorities in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. This framework will enable law enforcement authorities across the region to share information in identifying and tracing guns used in crime through ballistic identification.

CARICOM also welcomes, Mr. Chairman, the ongoing, direct engagement between IMPACS and the UNODC, and their joint determination to tackle issues of priority to the region. The identified priority areas of focus include the proliferation of illegal guns, as well as related transnational organized crime issues. We value the UNODC as an integral partner in our efforts and look forward to its increased coordination with IMPACS.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of numerous initiatives and mechanisms aimed at addressing the problems of armed violence, high levels of gun crimes persist in the region. According to the 2013 CARICOM Regional Crime and Security Strategy, illegal guns are responsible for over seventy per cent (70%) of murders in the region. The key to the solution is to markedly reduce the availability of illegal guns and ammunition.

Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding our efforts at the regional level, we remain firm advocates of action at the hemispheric and global levels to assist us in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

In our view the 2nd of April 2013 ushered in a new era of hope for the international community. The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty has the potential to assist in the eradication of arms violence which has adversely affected our people. We are heartened that small arms and light weapons are included in the scope of this landmark Instrument.
CARICOM support for the ATT has been demonstrated by the fact that thirteen members of the community have signed the ATT. Four members have already ratified the Treaty. These actions are clear indications of the political commitment of the Governments of our region to address the poorly regulated, irresponsible and illicit proliferation and transfer of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, as well as other conventional arms under the ATT.

The adoption of the ATT is a significant achievement for CARICOM countries, which had called for strong provisions on diversion to be included in the treaty, bearing in mind that diversion is the biggest problem, associated with the illegal trade in these weapons.

CARICOM reaffirms its commitment to co-operate with its partners, including NGOs, concerning the ratification, entry into force and full implementation of the ATT. In this light, CARICOM has endorsed the candidature of Trinidad and Tobago to host the Secretariat of this important organization. It will also be recalled that CARICOM was among the first to advocate for a secretariat when this matter had not gained much support in the process. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the provision of the required financial, human and other resources to secure the site of the Secretariat for the ATT in our region and is working assiduously with other States to achieve this objective.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM wishes to underscore the importance of the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (UNPOA) and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI). These non-binding instruments, as well as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, are vital in assisting Member States in dealing with the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons.

Our region is pleased that the 2012 Second Review Conference of the UNPOA resulted in the adoption of a consensus outcome document. Even though the Review Conference revealed that implementation of the UNPOA remained uneven and challenges and obstacles were ever-present, the overall success of the Conference and the adoption of an outcome document demonstrate that a considerable amount of work is being done to implement the UNPOA by Member States around the world.

In its bid to continue progress made in implementing the provisions of the UNPOA, CARICOM pledges its support to the Biennial Meeting of States to be held on 16-20 June, 2014 and again in 2016, and to the one-week open-ended meeting of government experts to take place in 2015.
CARICOM urges States to further demonstrate the political will and mobilize resources necessary to implement the UNPOA, as well as the ITI, in the bid to achieve clear and tangible results by the 2018 Third Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

After three years of 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 join 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.

Mr. Chairman,

In this time of global financial and economic uncertainty, many Member States are finding it difficult to mobilize adequate resources to address many issues, including the illegal trade in conventional weapons of all types. CARICOM therefore applauds the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) through the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC) for the increased assistance rendered to our countries, including through capacity building and technical assistance programmes as well as outreach activities to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as reported in the Secretary General’s Report contained in document A/68/134.

We commend UN-LiREC for its work in the region and call on Member States to continue the work of UNODA and its regional centres.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman,

2013 has been a landmark year in which significant strides were made in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The monumental adoption and subsequent signature, ratification and eventual entry into force of the ATT, will add immeasurably to the regional security architecture throughout CARICOM and beyond.

CARICOM is hopeful that our deliberations on Conventional Weapons will resonate outside of these walls and be translated into real and concrete actions to end the senseless suffering of so many in the world.

I thank you.