Statement by

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on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

during the

Thematic Debate of the Disarmament and International Security
Committee (First Committee)
on Conventional Weapons

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in contribution to the debate on conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Crime and insecurity rank high among the principal threats and obstacles to social and economic development in the Caribbean. In this context, the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses significant security challenges for our region. We do not manufacture, export or re-export these weapons nor ammunition, neither do we import them on a large scale but the extent of their impact in the region remains a source of concern.

Certain realities in our region such as the porous nature of our borders; our limited capacity to detect, intercept and seize illegal arms at ports of entry; and unfavourable socio-economic conditions in some parts of our countries make it particularly challenging to stem the illicit arms trade which operates in tandem with the illicit drug trade and other organized crime. The convergence of these factors has a destabilizing effect on our societies and undermines our economies.

Mr. Chairman,

For the aforementioned reasons among others, CARICOM remains a strong advocate for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as the framework to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons and to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in these weapons and to prevent their diversion. We are pleased with the progress made since the Treaty’s entry into force in 2014 and note with satisfaction that the Third Conference of States Parties to the ATT (CSP 3) decided to establish the Working Group on Treaty Universalization as a standing working group. CARICOM supports the initial
work plan of the group as we are convinced that eradication of the illicit trade in conventional arms would only be possible if the international community works as a collective bound by common obligations set out in the Treaty.

CARICOM was pleased to see the inclusion of a special thematic debate at CSP 3 with a timely focus on the links between the ATT and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We note that while SDG Target 16.4 explicitly speaks to reducing illicit arms flow, there are also linkages between the gender-based provisions of the ATT and SDG 5.2 which speaks to eliminating violence against women and girls. Going forward, the region believes that greater value could be derived from these focused debates if Member States aim to generate as many practical measures as possible to inform our work under the Treaty.

CARICOM shares the view that implementation of the ATT is a "long term endeavor" but reiterates that we are fully committed to the process and will support all initiatives to this end. We underscore as well the need for continued assistance and support to developing countries in particular to facilitate full implementation of the Treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

As we approach the convening of the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2018, CARICOM intends to remain fully engaged on the issues identified for focus during the Conference and to participate actively in the deliberations. We look forward to the Conference building on the consensus outcome document adopted by the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the PoA.

The region wishes also to acknowledge its ongoing partnership with the United Nations through the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) — a partnership that is aligned
with the CARICOM Strategic Plan and which has resulted in many concrete achievements in keeping with our obligations under the UN’s disarmament agenda. Measurable outcomes from this partnership include improved security in over 120 stockpile facilities across the region; the destruction of more than 54,000 weapons and 67 tonnes of ammunition; increased capacity of almost 800 security sector personnel in destruction techniques, stockpile and armoury management and port security; as well as the development of various CARICOM small arms and light weapons strategies resulting from direct collaboration between UNILREC and the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS). We look forward to continued and enhanced cooperation with the UN as we strengthen our capacity to fulfill the disarmament objectives.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to conclude with a special call to States that manufacture and export conventional arms. CARICOM is of the view that these States have a special responsibility to work with the rest of us in ensuring that there are adequate controls systems to safeguard against the diversion of these arms from legitimate uses to illicit markets. We have to work together to completely remove these weapons from the wrong hands as this is the fuel to so many conflicts around the world – conflicts in which thousands of lives are lost and many more injured and maimed. CARICOM is committed to doing its part and will work with all partners to this end.

I thank you.