Statement by

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to the United Nations

CARICOM statement to be delivered at the thematic discussion
on “Conventional Weapons”

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Mr. Chairman,

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

Mr. Chairman,

2. Among the several challenges to sustainable development in the Caribbean Community is the high incidence of violent crime. This has reduced citizen security, impeded socio-economic development, eroded confidence in nation building and heightened fear among the population. In this context, CARICOM remains seized of the need to combat the main drivers of criminality in the region among which is the illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their associated ammunition.

Mr. Chairman,

3. More than 70% of the people who die a violent death in the Caribbean region are killed with a gun. This statistic is even more alarming when we consider that the region does not manufacture, export or re-export small arms and light weapons and their ammunition neither do we import them on a large scale. The region, however, continues to battle the ill effects of the illicit proliferation of these weapons in our territories and is increasingly convinced of the need for heightened concrete action at all levels to combat this scourge which constitutes a serious affront to our development efforts. Our situation is especially challenging given our porous borders, our financial constraints and limited capacities.

Mr. Chairman,

4. CARICOM remains a strong advocate of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) conscious of the significant contribution it makes to international and regional peace, security and stability.

5. On 24 December 2019, the ATT will celebrate its 5th Anniversary since entry into force, with a total number of state parties of 104.

6. The ATT adequately provides for the regulation of the international trade in conventional weapons and addresses critical elements including the diversion of these weapons to illicit markets. CARICOM believes that the object of what the ATT was meant to accomplish should remain foremost in our minds until it is
achieved and hereby calls on Member States to strengthen their national control systems and update national legislation, policies and procedures to increase compliance with ATT obligations.

7. On this note, CARICOM underscores the need for a strong humanitarian element in decisions on arms transfer. As the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated in his 2018 Securing our Common Future, "High levels of arms and ammunition in circulation contribute to insecurity, cause harm to civilians, facilitate human rights violations and impede humanitarian access."

8. Universalization of the ATT remains a concern for CARICOM and we urge those UN Member States that are yet to ratify the Treaty to do so as a matter of urgency. CARICOM would wish to ensure the Treaty's universalization and commend those who have recently ratified including CARICOM Member State, Suriname.

9. CARICOM is encouraged by the outcome of the 5th Conference of States Parties (CSP5) to the ATT under the able presidency of Ambassador Janis Karklins of Latvia and looks forward to the Working Groups continued work based on the mandate given at CSP5. We again urge all States Parties to act in good faith for the full and effective implementation of the ATT.

Mr. Chairman,

1. CARICOM also recommits its support for key instruments that address the trade in and misuse of SALW including the UN Programme of Action to Reduce, Combat and Eradicate the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects (UNPoA, 2001) and its accompanying International Tracing Instrument (2005); the UN Firearms Protocol (entry into force 2005), supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (entry into force 2003) and the Arms Trade Treaty (entry into force 2014).

2. CARICOM welcomes the seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the UNPoA (BMS7), which presents an opportunity to assess progress toward implementing the results of the June 2018 review conference (RevCon3), which included strong statements on many issues, such as: ensuring that gender concerns are mainstream in policies on SALW transfers, and on destroying surplus, confiscated, seized and collected SALW.

3. CARICOM hopes that in the short-term Member States can summon the political will to have deliberations on SALW that are fully practical and that address all aspects of the illegal trade in these weapons, including ammunition, because the vast majority of deaths and injuries due to SALW use occur in crime. We also
urge a continued focus on the evolving challenges related to SALW management, including the impact of new and emerging technologies on weapon design. We look forward to actively participating in the Biennial Meetings of States Parties leading up to RevCon4.

Mr. Chairman,

4. CARICOM is pleased with the increasing attention being given to mainstreaming a gender dimension in disarmament processes including those related to conventional weapons. We affirm the view that women have a special contribution to make to disarmament processes as this is evident in our own region where women’s influence at the grassroots level has been important in de-escalating tensions in situations of armed violence. Further, we recognize that women are often disproportionately affected by violence in conflict and armed violence situations and believe that this warrants continued attention to the gendered impacts of the trade in conventional weapons. CARICOM is proud, therefore, of the biennial resolution that is spearheaded by Trinidad and Tobago on “women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arm control.”

Mr. Chairman,

5. CARICOM is of the view that greater work needs to be done to promote a common understanding of how all disarmament processes, including those relating to conventional weapons, feed into the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including Goal 16 and its related targets. We believe that such an understanding would propel our efforts forward with greater intensity and seriousness and would reduce the tendency to politicize these important questions which ultimately aim at engendering peaceful, prosperous and secure societies. On the same note, CARICOM also believes it is imperative to identify the synergies across disarmament instruments as this would aid our implementation and reporting efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Allow me to also emphasize the need to pay greater attention to the question of divestment from the manufacturing of all types of weaponry as this has direct implications for the sustainability of disarmament efforts.

7. In conclusion, Mr. Chair, CARICOM reiterates its commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the various international instruments governing conventional weapons and stresses that the success of these instruments require global commitment and global action.
I thank you.