STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
IN THE THEMATIC DEBATE
OF THE
PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION
TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE
IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

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Madame Chairperson

Trinidad and Tobago aligns itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as well as the statement delivered by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM). We also wish to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on your election to preside over this most important meeting.

Trinidad and Tobago views the work of the Preparatory Committee as providing a useful guide to proceedings at the Review Conference ("the Conference") to be held later this year. For us, the Conference does not only provide an opportunity to ascertain the gaps or pitfalls in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects ("the PoA"), but it should also serve as a means for the examination of possibilities to strengthen or enhance the PoA in the future. Consequently, it is our hope that the outcome document of this meeting would be more expansive and less restrictive.

As a responsible member of the international community, Madam Chairperson, Trinidad and Tobago is committed to fulfilling all aspects of the PoA, which include the following:

- Making illicit gun production/possession a criminal offence;
- Establishing a national coordination agency on small arms;
- Identifying and destroying stocks of surplus weapons;
- Keeping track of officially-held guns;
- Marking guns at point of manufacture for identification and tracing;
- Engaging in more information exchange;
- Maintaining records of gun manufacture.

In keeping with our obligations under the PoA, Trinidad and Tobago has put in place relevant legislation, regulations and administrative procedures to combat the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. In this regard, the local police authorities and the Customs and Excise Division are charged with the responsibility for controlling firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials and preventing their diversion. The Firearms Act which has been amended on several occasions to address new developments prohibits the manufacture or assembly of firearms and ammunition. Any natural or juridical person who intends to export firearms must receive the written permission of the Commission of Police. Similarly, the customs authorities would not permit the export of any firearms if the requisite permission is not obtained from the Commissioner of Police.
Trinidad and Tobago also maintains a Firearms Register which comes under the purview of the Commissioner of Police. This Register is intended to keep track of every license, registration certificate and permit that is issued, renewed or revoked by the Commissioner; every application for a license, registration certificate or permit that is refused by the Commissioner and information relating to the import or export of any firearm or ammunition.

The Firearms Act also criminalizes certain types of conduct. It makes the illegal manufacture, possession, stockpiling and trade in small arms and light weapons offences which are punishable by imprisonment on indictment. Additionally, any individual in possession with intent to sell or transfer a firearm also faces imprisonment on indictment. While the Firearms Act does not criminalize stockpiling, the Anti-Personnel Mines Act makes it an offence to stockpile these weapons.

Madam Chairperson,

Trinidad and Tobago is not a manufacturer of firearms but imports these weapons for purposes of national security. Our laws are strict on the need for proper regulation relating to the export and import of small arms and light weapons. For example, under the relevant legislation, before issuing an export license or authorization for shipment of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related material, the importing country should first be issued with the necessary license for import.

With regard to brokering, the Firearms Act makes provision for a Firearms Dealers License which lays out the obligations of dealers in terms of registration of transactions and prohibitions which flow from such license.

Trinidad and Tobago submits that the full and effective implementation of the PoA requires action at the national, bilateral, regional and international level. In keeping with these principles, the Honourable Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, in her capacity as Prime Minister with the responsibility for security matters, in the quasi-Cabinet of the Heads of Government of CARICOM ("the Heads"), took the initiative in 2011, to present a Draft Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons for the consideration of the Heads. This Declaration was adopted and it is now part of the machinery of the region in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, Trinidad and Tobago also collaborates with the CARICOM Implementation Agency on Crime and Security ("the IMPACS") to strengthen the regional response to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
We continue to maintain that cooperation at the multilateral level is essential to assist developing countries in implementing the PoA. Ample evidence of our support for this approach was shown in October 2011, when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with the support of UN-LiREC and the Government of Canada hosted the first phase of a firearms destruction and stockpile management programme in Port of Spain. Additional phases of the programme are to be mounted in April and June of this year.

In closing, Madam Chairperson, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reiterate its commitment to work with all members of the international community as it continues to fulfill its obligations which flow from the PoA, as well as, international treaties and conventions to which it is a State Party.

Thank you.