STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

by

H.E. Ambassador Walton Webson
Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda
to the United Nations

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

United Nations Headquarters

March 19, 2018

Please check against delivery
Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community. I would like to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on your election and assure you of the full cooperation and support of CARICOM and wish you a successful session.

- It is well-known that CARICOM countries are neither manufacturers nor large importers of conventional weapons, yet the region accounts for some of the highest murder rates in the world featuring the use of a firearm. It is cause for alarm that more than 70% of homicides are committed by illegal firearms trafficked into our region - mainly from countries which manufacture and export firearms and ammunition.

- Statistics show that developing countries are often much more negatively affected by the illicit use and trade in weapons while they are not even holders of significant arms stock. While the CARICOM region does not have any open conflict, the illegal trade in arms, closely linked to the trade in illegal drugs, has severely compromised the security of our citizens and directly threatens our economic and social development goals.

- The consequences of the illicit spread, widespread availability and trafficking of SALW and ammunition are by far, the most instrumental factor of high murder rates in CARICOM. The illicit trade in SALW, and associated ammunition constitute a huge impediment for peace and security and CARICOM achieving its sustainable development goals. The POA give us an additional tool to reduce human suffering, to eradicate criminality and to reduce violence caused by relatively easy access to illegal arms and ammunition in particular.

- The problem of illegal weapons is closely linked to transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking and money laundering, and the region is engaged in efforts to combat the effects of these scourges. One consequence of this is the opportunity cost that limited resources are diverted from improving economic and social situation have had to be diverted to address security and monitoring systems due to the presence of illegal weapons in our territories.

- Factors within the region that contribute to the perpetuation of this problem include: the porous nature of our land and sea 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 that make sectors of the population more susceptible to engaging in illegal activities.

- CARICOM Heads of Government issued a Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons at their 32nd Meeting, held in St. Kitts and Nevis in 2011. In that Declaration, the Heads underscored the importance of action at the regional, sub-regional and
international levels and committed themselves to all necessary action to fully combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Declaration also emphasized the "important role to be played by States that manufacture small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, in preventing their diversion to illicit trade." The Member States of CARICOM wish to reiterate this position and to urge all States that manufacture these products to increase their efforts aimed at reducing the possibility of these weapons being diverted for illegal purposes.

- CARICOM remains a convinced strong supporter of the POA and the ITI. CARICOM's commitment to this instrument is a central element of its tools in reducing armed violence. CARICOM considers it one of the most important practical achievements of global disarmament.

- CARICOM has been a powerful voice in promoting international and regional cooperation in efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We believe that this is a key aspect to achieving sustainable results in supporting States in fulfilling their obligations.

Mr. President, CARICOM priorities for this preparatory meeting include:

- International cooperation and assistance for the full and effective implementation of the POA and ITI, including capacity building. CARICOM also stresses the importance of transfer of technology, and capacity building for the involved personnel and maintenance and equipment particularly as it relates to border security and stockpile management.

- Exploring synergies particularly with the ATT and other international instruments relating to arms control, building on complementarities, particularly in light of our capacity constraints. CARICOM seeks to identify practical measures that allow harmonized implementation of the POA and other related international instruments.

- The role of women should be recognized and encouraged in keeping with SC resolution 1325 and other related GA resolutions including 71/56 on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In this vein, we seek strong references to women, girls, youth in the outcome document.

- CARICOM welcomes the development of agreed standards and best practices, based on regional practices as well as instruments and measures to address pervasive armed violence in crime; so that states can benefit from voluntary application of these guidelines.

- The need for the full and effective implementation of the International Instrument to enable states to identify and trace, in a timely and reliable manner, illicit small Arms
and light weapons and to promote international cooperation and assistance in marking and tracing.

- The illicit proliferation of ammunition fuels armed violence. CARICOM believes that there should be consideration of the relevance of safely and securely managing the life-cycle of conventional ammunition.