STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

by

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to the United Nations

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

June 18, 2018
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 SALW. 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 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 where limited resources are diverted from improving economic and social situation and then 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 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. The region remains convinced 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.

Mr. President, CARICOM priorities 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. We call for focused strategies that support the full and effective implementation of the POA and the ITI. Our vulnerability as SIDS require consideration given the porosity of our borders.

- 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. We should build on the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States in the Programme of Action with regard to the inclusion of ammunition as an aspect of our consideration in the implementation of the POA. CARICOM views it as critically important for the POA to prevent the illicit trade of SALW ammunition in all its aspects, including preventing the excessive accumulation of ammunition and diversion of insecure stocks.

- The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development’s “Global Burden of Armed Violence, 2015” estimated that from 2007-2012, more than 500,000 people died each year because of lethal violence. Roughly 85 percent of these deaths were not in conflict settings. This highlights the critical importance of focusing on reducing SALW violence within the CARICOM context. This review conference must consider this aspect of armed violence as it is a significant hazard to our countries.

- 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 Un POA and other related international instruments. The POA provides important elements for a framework to curb illicit SALW transfers between and within countries, even though its provisions are not legally binding. The entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty adds legally binding elements for the control of international transfers of SALW and other common types of conventional arms. Taken together, these two instruments complement and strengthen each other. In this regard, the same analysis could be extended to other instruments, such as the International Tracing Instrument, the International Firearms Protocol, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Secretary-General Guterres, in his May 2018 report on Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament, outlined that “Greater efforts are needed to achieve equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament.” 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. We must build on the important progress made during BMS6 regarding ensuring that gender perspectives are fully incorporated in our deliberations.

- CARICOM welcomes the development of agreed standards and best practices, based on regional practices as well as instruments, so that states can benefit from voluntary application of these guidelines.

- The need for the full and effective implementation of the International Tracing 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. Jamaica provides an excellent example of how this can be managed through it’s working paper submitted to this review conference titled ‘Standards manual for the Firearm Marking Information Management System and marking operations oversight’.

- Civil society plays a critical role on all of these SALW issues. Governments can increase their effectiveness by including representatives of a wide range of independent NGOs as full partners in the work to eradicate the illicit trade in SALW and to reduce the human costs of armed violence.

In conclusion, CARICOM welcomes the transparency and willingness to engage shown by the President as we have had over a year of consultations and meetings in the lead up this third review conference. The recently released draft outcome paper is a robust and substantive basis for us to begin our negotiations. CARICOM stands ready to engage with the President and other Member states to ensure that we take full advantage of the opportunity presented with this conference to ensure a successful outcome.