National Frameworks

Jamaica is currently in the process of reinforcing its capacity to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ammunition, and reduce the high levels of armed violence, as a result of transnational organized crime. At present, Jamaica suffers from a legislative, technical capacity, and equipment deficit that prevent the full implementation of our commitments under both the UN-Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI).

The Government is overhauling its national legislation, and administrative structures in order to facilitate the implementation of its various regional and international commitments under International Tracing Instrument, as well as the CIFTA, Firearms Protocol, and the UN-PoA. These efforts will ensure that Jamaica is in a position to, inter alia, mark and adequately trace all small arms and light weapons imported into the island for both private and government use.

With respect to existing mechanisms, Jamaica has designated a national focal point within the Ministry of National Security, tasked with overseeing the implementation and coordination of all small-arms related control activities, including the preparation of reports.

Jamaica has also established a Firearm Licensing Authority, as an independent body, which grants licenses for the importation of Firearms for private use. The database of firearms that is maintained by the Authority, which includes a ballistic signature of private firearms in Jamaica forms a critical component of the Government’s overall national infrastructure and plays a key role in facilitating tracing for criminal investigations.

Through its own internal assessment, the Government of Jamaica has identified a number of gaps, and has devised a strategy/course of action to fill the gaps identified. These include:

1. on the institutional/technical side: (a) the development of a National Small Arms Policy through the assistance of a Consultant; and the establishment of a National Small Arms Commission;
2. from a legislative standpoint: the repeal and replacement of the Firearms Act of 1967 and its amendments, with new legislation which will reflect all international commitments, including those related to marking and tracing.

Both activities are currently in a nascent stage, however, it is expected that the National Small Arms Policy, which will lay the foundations for other subsequent actions, will be completed by August 31, 2011.

Some of the expected benefits that we hope to achieve from the development of the National Small Arms Policy are: the establishment of networks/mechanisms to facilitate: greater information sharing between the various state agencies; and enhanced policy coordination between the various agencies; and in so doing correct one of our most recurring challenges, i.e. coordination among national agencies.

As the National Small Arms Policy is finalized, and the structure of the National Small Arms Committee is fully developed, Jamaica will be in a position to fully articulate the specificities of our assistance needs in this respect.

Thank you Mr. Chairman