Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CARICOM congratulates you on your appointment as Chair of this Meeting of Governmental Experts and assures you its full support and cooperation during this week’s deliberation. We also extend our appreciation to you for the open, transparent and inclusive consultative process which you undertook as Chair-designate to ensure the successful outcome of our deliberations this week.

CARICOM welcomes this morning’s adoption, by consensus, of the Agenda and Provisional Programme of Work and looks forward to a fruitful and interactive dialogue with delegations and members of civil society.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM’s position on all matters related to the implementation of the Programme of Action is well-known and has been articulated in every Biennial Meeting of States, the most recent of which was held in June 2010. We thank you also for the discussion papers which you have provided to guide us in our discussions.

On the issue of marking in the context of the ITI, CARICOM would like to highlight a few points:

- CARICOM remains committed to the implementation of the ITI and stresses the responsibility of major producing states with respect to the marking of weapons manufactured in these states. As a region which experiences a significant level of gun related violence, we attach great importance to all efforts aimed at regulating the manufacture and trade in small arms and light weapons, to which the issues of marking and tracing are of critical importance.
- CARICOM recognizes the tremendous role that the ITI can play towards addressing the problems we face in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and reiterates its position that the ITI should have been made legally binding with a provision on ammunition. In this regard, we reiterate our full support for the conclusion of an international legally binding tracing instrument that includes the issue of ammunition.
- Effective implementation of the ITI requires a comprehensive international assistance framework. CARICOM, at BMS4, reiterated its call for the establishment of a broad global approach to marking and tracing. Such an
approach, we believe, would help in the establishment of internationally accepted norms and standards that would effectively regulate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

- CARICOM is endeavouring to fulfil its obligation under the PoA, including the ITI. CARICOM has made some steps in implementation, particularly within the framework of our enhanced regional co-operation in the area of security (the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security – IMPACS), which has embarked on a major initiative - the Regional Integrated Ballistic Information Network (RIBIN) that will facilitate the tracking of guns used in crimes through ballistic identification. This information will be shared among law enforcement agencies in participating CARICOM Member States and once it becomes operational, will link the regional network with international systems, including, *inter alia*, the United States National Integrated Ballistics Identification Network (NIBIN).

- However, we are continually confronted with challenges in our efforts at implementation from both a technical and financial standpoint. There is an urgent need to sensitise key personnel at national level through, *inter alia*, the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building training programmes and mechanisms to assist in the centralisation and computerization of records. There is also a need for adequate marking equipment to enable CARICOM law enforcement agencies to mark all imported small arms for private use and in law enforcement. In this regard, we are pleased with the assistance offered by the Organization of American States (OAS) to the Latin American and Caribbean region through a cooperation agreement for the implementation of a project to promote the marking of firearms. The agreement, which has been signed by a number of our States within the framework of the Inter-American Convention on Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Related Material (CIFTA), aims to strengthen the region’s capabilities in the area and to provide marking equipment and training to beneficiary countries.

- There is a need also for assistance in enhancing the capabilities of law enforcement agencies in the areas of intelligence gathering and forensic analysis; and with implementation of necessary legislative changes to enable governments in the region to implement effective policy measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. While some Member States have taken steps to enact regulations to place all firearms under one regulatory framework, more needs to be done.

- CARICOM looks forward to continued assistance and support in this area, and to working closely with its regional and international partners on all matters related to the PoA and the ITI.

Mr. Chairman,

These are a few points we would like to make in relation to this specific item on our agenda. We hope that we can benefit from the information shared by experts here and the many examples of best practices from all regions.