Bahamas problems face on the issue of Weapons Record Keeping

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

Let me first congratulate you on the proficient manner in which you are conducting this MGE.

I have sat here over the past two days of deliberations, and have been amazed at the high levels of expertise presented thus far. I have also noted that no matter the size of the country involved, like the small island nation of the Bahamas, we are experiencing various levels of problems with illicit firearms. It is for this reason this MGE is most timely in providing a way forward in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

As it pertains to the issue of Records keeping in the Bahamas, we are faced with the problem of lack of resources and manpower. As it stands now the Police Firearms Registry Unit which is the only body responsible for the registration of firearms is grossly under staffed with three (3) persons having the arduous task of managing and operating this Unit. Their daily job description includes:

- Keeping the register of all Law Enforcement Agency weaponry
- Licensing and register keeping of authorized civilian weapons
- Licensing and register keeping of Firearms dealers
- As well as attending court for evidentiary identification purpose in all firearms related cases.

As stated by the representative of Australia in the morning session, funding for Firearms Registry is limited. Only when there are high profile firearms cases, there is usually an out cry from the public for better funding to assist the Unit in carrying out its mandate.

Further, there is the problem of archaic record keeping techniques. The use of paper books is still chiefly used for record keeping and cross referencing. It is only as of recent time that attempts were made to set up a computerized data bases registry.
As you can see there is a need for international assistance and training in this and other related processes. We commend the representative from Australia and Kenya for their presentations and look forward to related discussions with them and other countries.

I thank you Mr. Chairman