STATEMENT

BY

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OF THE

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON

SECOND REVIEW CONFERENCE ON THE

UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO PREVENT,

COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE IN

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS


August 27, 2012
UNited Nations, new york
Madam President

Trinidad and Tobago congratulates you and other members of the Bureau on your election to preside over this Second Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons ("the Programme of Action"). We also align with the statements delivered by the representatives of Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community ("CARICOM") and Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement ("NAM"). Trinidad and Tobago submits that this Conference presents an ideal opportunity to critically assess the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action as well as its companion instrument, the International Tracing Instrument ("the ITI").

Trinidad and Tobago submits further that while the task before us over the next two weeks is intricate, it is by no means insurmountable. We must be resolute in efforts to guide the discourse in a manner which produces a substantive outcome. An outcome which would strengthen the international armory dedicated to the prevention, combating and eventual eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. This trade has a direct link to the commission of armed violence, gender-base violence, terrorism and other serious crimes. If we fail to take decisive action, we would be adding another pillar of disappointment to that, which we witnessed last month, when as Members States, we failed to agree on the text of a legally binding arms trade treaty.

Madam President

Eleven years ago, Member States of the United Nations adopted the Programme of Action. We have had limited results in implementing this important initiative. The point was not lost on the Secretary General who, in his Report of April 05, 2011, indicated that the trade in small arms can be considered the least transparent of trade in all weapons systems. With this in mind, let us work even more assiduously to not only ascertain the gaps in implementation of the Programme of Action, but to use this opportunity also, to examine the possibilities for its strengthening.

Madam President

Trinidad and Tobago in its 2008 National Report on the implementation of the POA advanced that the English speaking Caribbean has not escaped from the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. At the time, it was described as the single most significant instrument of crime leading to public fear.

As a result, we have put legislative and other measures in place to implement the Programme of Action and the ITI, to cover several aspects of our obligations, including the following:
• Making illicit gun production a criminal offense
• Establishing a national coordination agency on small arms
• Identifying and destroying stocks of surplus weapons
• Keep track of officially-held guns
• Engage in more information exchange
• Ensuring better enforcement of arms embargoes
• Including civil society organizations in efforts to prevent small arms proliferation.

Madam President

The Honourable Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, has lead responsibility in the Quasi-Cabinet of CARICOM for matters relating to crime and security. Consequently, Trinidad and Tobago has a special responsibility for promoting and facilitating the common interests and objectives of the region in addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. In this regard, we have hosted a number of regional seminars and conferences on the issue with the support of UNLIREC and the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and the United States geared towards improving the capacity of our neighbours to implement both the POA and the ITI.

Only last month, one of the roundtable discussions addressed the issue of the inclusion of border controls as part of a revised Programme of Action. In fact, at the international level, CARICOM Member States have stated that greater attention needs to be placed on the issue of border controls as a component of the broader crime prevention measures and specifically, to prevent the flow of small arms and light weapons in the region. Member States of CARICOM, time and time again, have underscored the fact that although the countries of the region are not manufacturers nor large importers of small arms and light weapons, due to our geographic location, have become places for the transit, transshipment and places of final destination for weapons diverted from the legal trade to fuel both national and transnational criminal activities. Border controls, must therefore, become an integral part of a Revised Programme of Action. Furthermore, Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the link between illegal trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and the illicit trade in ammunition. For this reason, we are requesting that consideration be given to the inclusion of ammunition under the Programme of Action and the ITI.

Madam President

Trinidad and Tobago fully subscribes to the principles of shared responsibility and international cooperation and reiterates its commitment to work with members of the international community, inter-governmental organizations and members of civil society as we continue to fulfill our obligations which flow from the POA and the ITI.

I thank you.