REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

STATEMENT

on Behalf of the CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

by

H.E. Mr. George Talbot,
Permanent Representative

at the Second Review Conference on the
United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat
and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

August 27, 2012

Kindly check against delivery
Madam President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

 Permit me at the outset to congratulate you on your election as the President of this Second Review Conference, as well as to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election. CARICOM has every confidence that under your leadership we will be guided towards the substantive outcome our region expects this Conference will produce.

 The 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, was born out of a common concern and shared recognition that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons had far reaching, diverse and adverse impacts and consequences in each Member State and also from our collective responsibility to address this scourge. This common concern, shared recognition and collective responsibility binds us today.

 Madam President,

 The geographic location and characteristics of our region: i.e. expansive coastlines and maritime boundaries as well as remote and extensive land borders in several CARICOM countries render the Member States of our Community particularly vulnerable to the illicit trade in firearms. Consequently, our region has acutely suffered the effects arising from the illicit trade in small arms and other forms of transnational organized crime: public and human insecurity has risen, our livelihoods have been threatened, and our socio-economic progress severely hampered, and our youth in particular faced with often dire circumstances.

 CARICOM has, at every available opportunity, including at our Preparatory Meeting in March, pointed to the devastating impact on our societies, our economies, our development and our security resulting from the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have, at every opportunity, underscored that the Member States of CARICOM are neither manufacturers of, nor large scale importers of small arms and light weapons. In spite of this reality, our region is awash in illegal small arms and their ammunition. In a recent statement, the Association of Caribbean Police Commissioners estimated that there are over 1.6 million illegal small arms in circulation in our region.

 Madam President, from CARICOM’s perspective, this Second Review Conference is therefore of the utmost importance; it is an opportunity to review the progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action and, of priority to CARICOM, an opportune occasion to explore concrete ways to strengthen its implementation at all levels. This Conference is also an opportunity to reaffirm our
commitment to the Programme of Action as the single comprehensive, normative framework to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Madam President,

Since the Programme of Action was adopted, Member States have made many efforts to advance its implementation with the support of regional and international organizations, and civil society.

CARICOM Member States have at both the national and regional levels undertaken a number of legal, administrative, technical and capacity-building measures to implement the POA. At the national level we have improved legislation, acquired the technology to mark firearms to facilitate tracing and enhanced the capacity of law enforcement personnel. We have made efforts to improve the security of government held stockpiles and have safely destroyed confiscated firearms and ammunition. In this regard, the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Organization of American States have played key roles in supporting national level efforts.

As a region, we have established the necessary regional institutions and framework to support our efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in arms such as our Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) which maintains the CARICOM Intelligence Sharing Network (CISNET) and is developing our future Regional Integrated Ballistic Information Network to allow CARICOM Member States to identify and trace guns and ammunition used to commit crimes. Our Heads of Government have adopted a CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons underscoring the region's collective commitment to confront the illicit trade in firearms and shape a framework for regional action.

At the global level, we have built partnerships on a bilateral and multilateral basis. We have worked to strengthen the capacity of customs and border control officials. CARICOM has long emphasized that a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of cross border controls is a *sine qua non* if we are to effectively prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Equally, CARICOM remains steadfastly committed to the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument. We view the ITI as a critical, practical tool for deterring the diversion of small arms and light weapons into the illicit trade by providing States with information to combat and eradicate such trade. Technical assistance and international cooperation, particularly for small, non-manufacturing States, is necessary if the ITI is to be effective. CARICOM emphasizes that major producing States bear particular responsibility to require the marking of weapons by
manufacturers. We continue to hold that the ITI should be a legally binding instrument, which includes ammunition and which provides the basis for a global approach to marking and tracing.

Madam President,

There is no doubt that while much has been achieved, much more remains to be done. This is why at the Preparatory Committee meeting in March, CARICOM offered specific ways in which the implementation of the Programme of Action could be strengthened. We called for:

- International cooperation and assistance to our region to be focused in the areas of technical assistance to facilitate reporting and legislative drafting, capacity building in intelligence gathering and analysis, in prosecutorial and investigative techniques, and in forensics;
- Development of an electronic platform for the sharing of best practices of effective programmes and initiatives implemented at the regional level allowing sub-regions and regions who may wish to replicate such effective programmes;
- Greater focus on strengthening cross border controls at the global level; in this regard, we propose the establishment of an Inter Agency Mechanism to bring together the existing expertise and work already being done by various agencies at the global level including the World Customs Organization, Interpol, the UN 1540 Committee, the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and others;
- Clear mandates and objectives for the follow up process, recognizing that Meetings of Government Experts, Biennial Meetings and Review Conference serve distinct but complementary purposes;
- Exploring effective ways of measuring implementation of the POA and the impact of its implementation on the ground;
- Establishing a Trust Fund to support implementation;
- Scope for discussing issues related to the POA such as armed violence, gender, new technological developments and ammunition to enable the full and effective implementation of the POA.

Madam President,

We thank you for the revised drafts of the outcome document that you have circulated; we consider these to be an excellent basis for our discussion and negotiation.

For CARICOM, it is imperative that this Second Review Conference produce a substantive outcome: an outcome which strengthens mechanisms for
implementation, supports States’ efforts at the national level, enhances regional cooperation, encourages targeted and measurable international cooperation and assistance, establishes a clear follow-up process for the next review cycle, and creates space for addressing interlinked issues; such an outcome will help us to realize the purpose of the Programme of Action.

In July of this year, we failed to agree on a legally binding instrument regulating the trade in conventional arms. The proposed treaty would have served as an important corollary to the non-binding Programme of Action. We cannot allow this Conference to suffer the fate of failure currently pervading the conventional arms debate. The price of inaction is too high. The eyes of the world are upon us once again.

Madam President, CARICOM is prepared and ready to work towards a substantive outcome and you can continue to count on our full support and cooperation.

I thank you.