

Statement to be delivered by Hon. Minister of National Security at the
Preparatory Regional Workshop on Negotiations for an Arms Trade Treaty,

July 5-6, 2010

Salutations

Mr Chairman, A very pleasant morning to all.

It is a privilege and indeed an honour for me to deliver the opening remarks at this Preparatory Regional Workshop on Negotiations for an Arms Trade Treaty. Please allow me first of all to thank the Government of Australia, the Women's Institute for Alternative Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for your respective inputs in making this workshop possible.

Additionally, Mr Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to commend the hosts for organizing this workshop which is geared towards arriving at a CARICOM consensus position, on the needs of the region that should be addressed in the Arms Trade Treaty, to be negotiated at the United Nations in 2012. This CARICOM position, it is expected, can then inform the work of the Open -Ended Working Group on an Arms Trade Treaty, scheduled to commence next week, in New York.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the convening of the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty by the United Nations in 2012. That Conference is expected to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms.

Trinidad and Tobago, as a member of an informal Grouping of like-minded states, the Arms Trade Treaty Group (ATT), which also includes Australia, the United Kingdom, Costa Rica and Kenya, as well as members of the NGO community, has taken a lead role in lobbying UN member states for the establishment of a legally binding ATT. Our Government is particularly pleased with this development as we

feel that a legally binding instrument can address the many dimensions of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Mr Chairman, the proliferation of illicit small arms in Trinidad and Tobago and the diffusion and use of such arms within civilian communities can aptly be described as a national crisis. This situation, when viewed in tandem with the prevailing culture of violence, represents a real and persistent challenge to the successful pursuit by Government of attaining sustainable, social and economic development in an atmosphere of personal safety, security and well-being, in our twin-island state.

Trinidad and Tobago is therefore fully committed to the implementation of the UN Programme of Action and as such has applied various measures in compliance with the programme. On a national level, our Government has proceeded to update its national policies and legislative frameworks to provide a comprehensive and integrated strategy to address the threat posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Furthermore, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in May 2009 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives Agency (ATF, Department of justice) with a view to introducing E-tracing. It is hoped that local and bilateral efforts would help to more effectively track and seize firearms through the use of technologies that would synergize the efforts of the law enforcement, intelligence and scientific communities.

At the regional level, Trinidad and Tobago actively collaborates with the CARICOM Implementation Agency on Crime and Security (IMPACS) to place its national efforts in alignment with decisions taken at the level of the Council of National Security and Law Enforcement Ministers (CONSLE).

At the international level, Trinidad and Tobago is signatory to several international instruments and conventions which outline a framework of action and activities in the area of small arms proliferation.

Our Government remains fully supportive of a regional consensus position on the needs of the region which we seek to have addressed in the ATT.

It is my hope, Mr Chairman, that this two day workshop will see us progressing towards this goal with a renewed sense of commitment in going beyond the boundaries of the UN Programme of Action. Ladies and gentlemen I wish you every success in your deliberations.

I thank you.