STATEMENT

By the

The Honourable Winston Dookeran
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

on

The Occasion of the Opening for Signature of
The Arms Trade Treaty

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United Nations Headquarters
Monday 3rd June, 2013
Mr. President

It is with a tremendous sense of pride that I am here this morning to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, or ATT as it is better known, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am especially honoured because of the role played by my own country, and the Caribbean Community ("CARICOM"), in the negotiations and conclusion of this landmark Treaty which establishes common international standards for the transfer or trade in conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

This is a landmark achievement for Trinidad and Tobago and the world and it has come at a time when our country has embarked on a policy of engagement in its diplomatic affairs.

Mere days ago we had visits from US Vice President Joseph Biden and also the President of China His Excellency Xi Jinping.

During Vice President Biden’s stay, decisions were taken to expand the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to deal more effectively with the very significant security challenges facing CARICOM and the Dominican Republic.

These include: the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Border Security, Crime Management, Counter Terrorism and Criminal Deportation.

Today, States which sign the ATT are openly demonstrating their intention to be bound by an agreement which enhances transparency in the trade in arms. It also establishes norms to prevent the diversion of conventional weapons from the legal to the illicit market.

It is this diversion, Mr. President, which is at the heart of the illegal trade in small arms in the Caribbean.

It was our Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar who underscored the fact that our weapons of mass destruction are, in reality, the guns and ammunition which end up in the hands of our criminals.

Mr. President

Prior to the adoption of the Treaty, there were no legally binding international mechanisms which provided for open and frank dialogue between those countries affected by the flow of arms and the suppliers of these commodities.

Trinidad and Tobago is satisfied that the Treaty provides for an Assembly of States Parties where issues relating to the breach of treaty obligations by recalcitrant States can be addressed.
Mr. President
While Trinidad and Tobago is elated to be part of this signing ceremony, we are not oblivious of the fact that, for the ATT to have any meaning, it must not only be signed but also be implemented in the domestic laws of Member States.

Trinidad and Tobago has begun the process of ratification of the Treaty and expects to be among the first fifty (50) States to permit the ATT to become operational.

We are also examining our laws to ensure that they are compatible with the provisions of the agreement.

Mr. President
We are satisfied that the ATT has established a Secretariat to assist States Parties with capacity building initiatives and other matters necessary for the fully and effective implementation of their obligations which flow from the Instrument.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that we have the capacity and resources to host the Secretariat and in this regard Trinidad and Tobago today declares its interest in formally making a bid to house the Secretariat.

We will be embarking on a campaign to secure the support of the global community to ensure that we are successful in this endeavour and we count on the support of all States gathered here today.

Member States, we are certain that our challenges go beyond small arms and light weapons, but clearly this Treaty will assist us in a number of areas such as counter terrorism, the drug trade, money laundering, human trafficking, border security and criminal deportation.

It is, therefore, our expectation that this Treaty will add immeasurably to regional security architecture throughout CARICOM and beyond.

I thank you.