Sixth Biennial Meeting of States to consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects
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CARICOM WORKING PAPER

GENERAL REMARKS

- The Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) remain strong supporters of the United Nations Programme of Action (UN PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). For CARICOM, the effective implementation of the UN PoA and ITI is central to reducing armed violence, facilitated by the misuse and illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition. CARICOM takes an active part in the UN Small Arms Process, as the global reference framework for efforts in the field of small arms control and has been a active voice in promoting arms control at the UN process and other fora. Consequently, the CARICOM Declaration on SALW (2011) explicitly recognizes the UN PoA and the ITI as universal mechanisms that address the illicit proliferation and abuse of SALW.

- CARICOM considers the ITI as one of the most important practical achievements of the UN PoA. In adopting the instrument, Member States have committed themselves to taking a number of steps to ensuring that SALW are suitably marked and recorded and to stepping up cooperation in tracing illicit SALW. CARICOM has repeated its calls for the ITI to be made legally binding.

- As Small Island Developing States (SIDS), CARICOM Member States are affected disproportionately by the substantial social and economic effects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Nonetheless, CARICOM has made significant strides at the national and regional levels to implement the UN PoA and the ITI.
- The CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy (2013) identifies the trafficking of guns (SALW) as an immediate significant threat to the Region. The CARICOM Heads of Government also adopted the CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons (2014) as a regional mechanism to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

- CARICOM Member States, having been at the forefront in advancing the ATT and having played a significant role in garnering the support of UN Member States to include small arms and light weapons (SALW), their component parts and ammunition in the Treaty, the Region welcomed the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty. To date, all CARICOM Member States have signed the Treaty and the majority have ratified.

- In discussing the BMS, CARICOM supports the discussions and proposals on examining the relationship of the POA and ITI with other initiatives and instruments such as the ATT. The Region also recommend the inclusion, in the BMS6 discussions of reference to Security Council Resolution 2220 (2015) on SALW, building on the Security Council Resolution 2117 (2013), which was the first ever stand-alone Security Council Resolution on SALW, as well as the Secretary-General’s report to the Security Council of 22 August 2013 entitled “Small Arms” (S/2013/503).

- CARICOM is of the view that BMS6 should be an opportunity to adopt a substantial outcome document that explores practical ways to improve global efforts to implement the UN PoA and the ITI.

1. Consideration of the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, at the national level, the regional level – including through regional and sub-regional arrangements and organizations – and at the global level, and in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- In considering the implementation of the UNPOA since BMS5, it is important to recall that States have explicitly committed themselves to ensure that there are adequate and detailed standards and procedures relating to the management and physical security of SALW stockpiles. Proper management of SALW stockpiles including physical security measures is instrumental in curbing small arms proliferation, preventing the diversion of SALW from the legal to the illicit markets and improving safety and accountability.
• Arising from the recommendations in the Outcome Document of the BMS5 on stockpile management and physical security measures, CARICOM Member States, at the national and regional levels, have paid increased attention to putting in place adequate and proper life-cycle management procedures that could reduce stockpile security risks. CARICOM, however, considers that the issue of stockpile management, including security measures requires continued attention. CARICOM recognizes the value of effective proper security and management of stockpiles of SALW, in particular in settings of armed violence and transnational organized crime. Proper security measures are essential in preventing accidents and reducing the risk of diversion to the illicit trade, illegal armed groups, terrorists and other unauthorized recipients.

• The Region considers this is also true of ammunition stockpiles. The illicit proliferation of ammunition fuels armed violence and provides gangs and other transnational organized groups with necessary tools of violence. Such acts underline the relevance of safely and securely managing the life-cycle of conventional ammunition. CARICOM would therefore like to see the role of ammunition in the implementation of the PoA discussed at the BMS6.

• The Region welcomes the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs) and believe that they can be used on a voluntary basis as a guide for dealing with ammunition and explosives.

• Although considerable resources have been dedicated by Regional Governments with support from bilateral and regional partners for the safe and secure management of stockpiles in the region, CARICOM recognizes that there remain deficiencies to render the safe and secure management of SALW and associated ammunition including:

  - inadequately trained staff which invariably leads to security gaps and management loopholes;
  - inadequate infrastructure and equipment;
  - inadequate maintenance; and
  - inventory management and record keeping;

• CARICOM recognizes that stockpile management, including physical security measures, can benefit from technological advances, bearing in mind the different situations, capacities and priorities of States, but we also note that basic risk mitigation measures may improve security and safety substantially.

• CARICOM welcomes the development of agreed standards and best practices, based on such instruments as the International Small Arms
Control Standards (ISACS) and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). States could benefit from the voluntary application of these guidelines.

- Sustainable solutions should be envisaged which include capacity building, transfer of knowledge and technology and institution building. Full life cycle management represents a possible and sustainable approach.

- CARICOM welcomes and encourages States to share expertise and build further capacity in the safe and secure management of stockpiles, including relevant training in this area, and to facilitate the provision of such expertise and training, where requested.

- National reports are key to measuring and, ultimately, assessing the implementation of the UN PoA To assist in this area, the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) will in July 2016, through the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) donor-funding, implement a regional project to strengthen the capacity of National Points of Contact (NPCs) in implementing the UN PoA and ATT and other related arms control instruments through technical training programmes. CARICOM recognizes the importance of reporting on national implementation of the UN PoA for providing data and identifying specific assistance needs. One of the primary outcomes of this project is to increase the number of national reports presented by CARICOM Member States.

- CARICOM recognizes that regional and sub-regional organizations have an important role to play, upon request, in the implementation of the UN PoA and the ITI, including the coordination of assistance. In this regard, CARICOM appreciates the ongoing technical assistance from CARICOM IMPACS which is illustrated through the development of CARICOM Model Law - Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) Bill and Regulations which explores synergies between the ATT and other international instruments relating to arms control, including the UN PoA and ITI.

- Cognizant of the complementarities between the ATT and the UNPOA and in light of our capacity constraints, CARICOM is seeking to identify practical measures that allow harmonized implementation of the ATT and the UN PoA. We therefore support discussions at BMS6 to consider possible synergies between the UN PoA and the ATT.

- The recently adopted 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda provides a roadmap for the next 15 years of global development, and its implementation should be explored in United Nations processes.
CARICOM therefore, holds the view that there is merit in the inclusion of the specific target 16.4 to significantly reduce illicit arms flows. CARICOM submits that this complementarity could form the basis of interaction with the UN POA, bearing in mind the direct correlation between armed violence and development to the CARICOM region.

- The role of women should be recognized and encouraged in keeping with Security Council resolution 1325 and General Assembly resolution 69/61 on Women, Disarmament, Non proliferation and Arms Control.

- The adoption of Security Council resolution 2117 (2013) signals a major step forward in international cooperation on arms control. CARICOM is encouraged by Security Council Resolution 2220 (2015) which calls for greater cooperation and sharing of information between Member States, relevant United Nations entities, intergovernmental, regional and sub regional organizations on relevant issues relating to SALW.

- CARICOM re-emphasizes and stresses the need for States to consider at BMS6, ways to enhance the exchange of information between authorities at the national, regional and international level related to tracing results as well as other relevant information relevant to marking, record keeping and tracing of SALW. A key challenge in the region is the computerization of records, so that each gun can be linked to its last legal user. CARICOM welcomes assistance in the development of a data management system, in conformity of paragraph 14 and 15 of the ITI.

2. Consideration of the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, including recent developments in small arms and light weapons technology and their implications for the International Tracing Instrument.

- CARICOM considers the ITI one of the most important practical achievements of the UN PoA. In adopting the instrument, UN Member States have committed themselves to taking a number of steps to ensure that SALW are suitably marked and recorded and to stepping up cooperation in tracing illicit SALW. CARICOM has repeatedly and continuously called for the ITI to be made legally binding and for the scope of a legal instrument to include ammunition.

- In order to ensure the full and effective implementation of the ITI, the Region calls on States to consider options for developing a comprehensive international assistance framework to provide resources, training, capacity-building and technical assistance to
developing countries, upon request, to support the effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument as outlined in the Outcome Report of BMS5 (Para. 27 (i)).

- CARICOM notes that new developments in small arms manufacturing, technology and design, including the increasing use of polymer components, the development of modular weapon systems and the production of firearms using additive manufacturing processes (3D printing) have significant implications for marking, record-keeping and tracing and pose a series of challenges to the implementation of existing control instruments, such as the UN PoA and the ITI. During the Second Meeting of Governmental Experts (MGE2), CARICOM contributed a Working Paper on the Implications of Recent Development in Small Arms and Light Weapon highlighting its position and advancement of possible solutions.

- CARICOM stresses the utmost importance of the transfer of technology, as well as the application of accompanying measures such as capacity building for the involved personnel and maintenance of the transferred equipment. This is essential in developing a sustainable approach to assistance. CARICOM reiterates that ignoring the importance of technology transfer and the development of sustained in-country expertise could lead to a further widening of the technological divide between developed and developing States and may increasingly weaken the implementation of the UNPoA and the ITI.

- CARICOM also urges States to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the framework of INTERPOL’s illicit arms records and tracing management system, iARMS, which assists its member countries to report, search and trace stolen and lost firearms and which will also hold an analytical and statistical tool about trafficked firearms and the results of tracing operations.

- CARICOM believes that the use of ballistic information sharing and databases could contribute to the improved effectiveness, efficiency and speed of tracing illicit SALW. CARICOM is appreciative of UNLIBEC’s contribution to prevent and solve gun crimes across the region through their Forensic Ballistics Systems Assistance Project which aims to increase the capacity of firearms examiners to present reliable ballistic evidence in courts of law and improve evidence sharing among States.

- CARICOM Member States welcome continued adequate technical and financial assistance to strengthen national capacities for ballistics information collection and exchange in order to further strengthen the
implementation of the UN 2001 PoA on Small Arms and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI).

- CARICOM recognizes that a technological divide between States means that new developments in SALW technology affect States differently. Many SIDS face barriers in implementing the basic requirements of the UN PoA and ITI. We strongly emphasize the need for more in-depth consideration of new and existing technologies, including in the light of international cooperation and assistance, capacity-building, and the transfer of technology and knowledge.

- CARICOM reiterates that “while technological development has contributed to the implementation of the UN PoA and ITI, the reality was that many States have not benefited and that the gap between developed and developing States is widening. CARICOM wished to underline the urgent need to bridge the existing technological gap between the developed and developing States and for developed States to increase assistance in developing countries, as well as for the support infrastructure. CARICOM also notes that the absence of relevant infrastructure was a major hindrance to harnessing the benefits of modern information technology in SALW controls. (CARICOM discussion paper, MGE 2).

3. Consideration of international cooperation and assistance for the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument, including capacity-building:

- CARICOM strongly hopes that BMS6 will be used to discuss the effectiveness and possible improvement of the existing cooperation and assistance framework, underlining the need for national ownership, including by looking at issues such as the measurability and evaluation of assistance, the importance of identifying and prioritizing assistance needs, as well as of coordination amongst donors.

- The Region considers that continued international cooperation and assistance remain key for the successful implementation of the UN PoA and ITI and should therefore continue to form an integral element of any UN PoA and ITI meetings. Although national and regional efforts are being made to combat the illicit arms trade, more international assistance and cooperation are essential for the effective implementation of the UN PoA and ITI.

- One of the major challenges faced by CARICOM SIDS in implementing the UN PoA and ITI is a lack of adequate resources and technical capacity. We further emphasize the need for increased border controls,
national capacity-building, technology transfers and information sharing.

- CARICOM supports regional organizations in continuing their leading role in the UN PoA and ITI implementation, especially in the areas of marking, record keeping and tracing.

- CARICOM believes that the modalities of international cooperation and assistance should be further enhanced as referenced in the conclusions of the Chair’s Summary at MGE 2 (Para. 49). Options for the enhanced funding of activities relating to the implementation of the UN PoA and ITI should be considered.

- With reference to the Chair’s Summary Report at MGE 2, CARICOM reiterate that in the provision of international cooperation and assistance, key issues included taking into account the national priorities of beneficiary countries and crucially, involving national authorities in the entire cycle of project implementation, beginning with the planning, design, and continuing to the implementation and assessment phases. Among other things, such an involvement would facilitate a more efficient transfer of relevant knowledge to the beneficiary country.

- We recommend that the Meeting consider existing trust fund modalities for the full and effective implementation of the UN POA and the ITI, and whether the setting up of other trust funds is required.