Remarks upon the Launching of

*Forces of Change: Profiles of Latin American and Caribbean Women in Combating Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms*

By

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Women, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control
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We come now to a special item in our agenda today, the launching of a new UNLIREC magazine, *Forces of Change: Profiles of Latin American and Caribbean Women in Combating Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms*.

This is a special event for us at UNODA because this publication embodies a combination of several of our official mandates, including—education, advocacy, advancing gender equality, and preventing the illicit trade of small arms, one of the most difficult tasks in our wider mandate concerning the regulation of armaments.

It is fitting that we are launching this publication at this particular event hosted by the Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago, given this country’s leadership in introducing General Assembly resolution 65/69 of 2010 on “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control”.

Today, thanks to such initiatives and the combined efforts of women and enlightened governments around the world, it is widely recognized that women have critical roles to play both in disarmament and in the elimination of the illicit trafficking in small arms. It is therefore our duty to ensure that we provide the necessary tools and training to empower them on this quest.

I can assure all who care about this cause that it is my own personal mission to continue fostering disarmament expertise among women, including ‘in-house’ at UNODA and heed the calls made in UN Security Council resolution 1325(2000). I know the Secretary-General is no less committed to advancing this vitally important goal.

Now, we all know that much of the literature about the illicit trade in small arms refers to highly technical or statistical issues. Yet there is also a need to bring these numbers down to earth and to show the human face of efforts underway to address this challenge. This publication goes far in meeting that need.

It specifically celebrates the productive contributions of Latin American and Caribbean women in the implementation of the UN 2001 Programme of Action against the illicit trade in small arms. The 58 women profiled in this magazine come from a variety of backgrounds, countries, and areas of expertise. Yet they are all united in sharing one common goal: addressing the scourge of illicit small arms trafficking and reducing the adverse impact of armed violence on their fellow citizens.

Readers will be introduced to these truly remarkable women. Some are sitting in parliament. Some are protecting our streets and borders. And some are at the forefront of healthcare to those women and in the back rooms advocating for small arms control. All of them are *forces of change* dedicated to making their region a safer one.

I understand that these are but a select few of the hundreds of women who could have been represented in this edition. Growing numbers of women from Latin America and the Caribbean are working to implement the Programme of Action as advocates, disarmament experts, security sector officials, legislators, researchers, high-level decision-makers, and in other related capacities. I invite them to contact our UNLIREC team in Lima, so that we can feature their work in future e-publications.
Throughout the history of global disarmament efforts, women have often been leading the way. In the late 1950’s, when strontium-90 and other radio-isotopes started appearing in mother’s milk and the teeth of infants, women’s groups rallied with the medical profession and unleashed a political process that resulted in the adoption of the Partial Test Ban Treaty, which outlawed all nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in the oceans, or in outer space.

Women were at the forefront of efforts to publicize and to condemn the horrific indiscriminate effects of landmines. Their efforts substantially contributed to the conclusion of the Mine Ban Convention, a result that earned Ms. Jody Williams a Nobel Peace Prize, which she shared with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Women once again rose to condemn the use of cluster munitions, a truly insidious weapon that has claimed countless innocent civilians among their victims, and they reinforced successful international diplomatic efforts to conclude the Cluster Munitions Convention.

We know from the statements made on this panel that women are making significant contributions to global and regional efforts to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

And I am also aware and wish to commend today the efforts by women’s groups around the world to promote the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Building universal support for all these goals must remain a high priority not just among women, but among all of humanity, because of the many benefits that progress in these fields will bring to our common security. Yet this is not all. This progress also holds out the prospect of conserving vast resources that could certainly be used to meeting compelling social and economic needs throughout the world.

I am convinced that women have only just begun to show the strength of their commitment in the field of disarmament. So while reports of alarming world events continue to fill our newspapers, let us today remember and herald the progress that is being made.

Let us pay our respects to the women of the world who are working so hard to meet genuine security challenges facing all nations and future generations. Let us wish them well in all their pursuits.

And let us join hands with our grandfathers, fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons everywhere who share our common commitment. In this spirit, we can truly move the world to a better place.