



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
820 Second Avenue, 5th Floor • New York, N.Y. 10017 • Tel.: (212) 697-7620 • Fax: (212) 682-3580

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Ambassador Philip Sealy
Permanent Representative
of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
to the United Nations

at the

Preparatory Committee for the United Nations
Conference to Review Progress Made in 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

NEW YORK

Wednesday, January 11, 2006

Mr. Chairman

Among the prime objectives of Trinidad and Tobago's sustainable social and economic development policy is the continued existence of an atmosphere of personal safety, security and well-being for all its citizens and residents to which the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago remains firmly committed.

The illicit trade in firearms, fueled in no small part by the illicit trafficking of illegal drugs represents, however, a real and persistent obstacle to the successful pursuit of this objective, posing as it does, a constant threat to the security and stability of the society, and having deleterious effects on the health and well being of its citizens. Illegal firearms are known to be at the core of escalating gun violence within the society and to be used as well in the commission of other serious crimes. The threat is particularly severe in small open and vulnerable countries and societies which are required to divert resources from other priority areas in order to mount effective anti-criminal campaigns.

In order to curb the scourge of gun related violence in the society, Trinidad and Tobago is actively involved in a number of initiatives at the global, hemispheric, subregional and national levels. In this regard, we have become a party to a number of global and hemispheric agreements; participated actively in the work of the CARICOM Regional Task Force on Crime and Security; reinforced domestic criminal legislation relating to firearms; provided additional assets to the land based as well as sea-going law enforcement agencies; taken steps to strengthen the professional capacity of the law enforcement agencies; put in place a wide array of social programmes; and will shortly be taking steps to improve maritime border security, all of which are aimed at combating this global phenomenon.

Additionally, we have established a national committee comprising all the key law-enforcement and related agencies as well as a representative of civil society which will oversee at the domestic level the further implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action, which is a further manifestation of the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to adopt concrete measures to address this problem in all its aspects.

It must, however, be pointed out that the 2001 Programme of Action does not adequately address the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons from the demand side, an element that is of direct relevance to us, neither does it take into account the gendered implications of this problem given the negative effect which gun violence has on women's personal security and well being and the fact that men, particularly young men, constitute the vast majority of perpetrators and victims of armed violence. We urge that these aspects be taken up at the Review Conference.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is also cognizant of the important role that can be played by civil society in assisting governments in their efforts aimed at promoting effective action to curb the proliferation and misuse of firearms, and will be

cooperating with a local NGO - the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) in undertaking a project aimed at controlling the prevalence and use of illicit firearms and which targets the youth through sensitization, education and other novel interventions.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is of the firm belief however, that the fight against the proliferation of small arms will only be successful if there is continued cooperation and support from the international community. One such way which the international community can contribute positively, to the achievement of this goal is by taking the initial steps to agree to a set of global principles on international arms transfer, and to subsequently develop those global principles into a binding legal instrument. This issue should accordingly be taken up at the Review Conference.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that it is only through the collective political will and the concerted action of the Member States in partnership with global civil society that one will put an end to this evil which has such a destructive impact on the lives of so many in our societies. It is incumbent on us to unite our efforts in this endeavour.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.