



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

**Proposed Text
for
Presentation By The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago On
The Occasion of The Second Biennial Meeting of States to
Consider the Status On The Implementation Of The
United Nations Programme of Action To Combat And
Eradicate The Illicit Trade In Small Arms and Light
Weapons In All Its Aspects, July 11-15, 2005.**

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over The Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Status On The Implementation Of The United Nations Programme of Action To Combat And Eradicate The Illicit Trade In Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects.

Mr. Chairman, the phenomenon of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is considered to be the single-most significant instrument of crime leading to widespread public alarm. In Trinidad and Tobago, illegal firearms are integrally linked to the drug trade and have evolved as a major and independent category of transnational criminal activity. Instances of the use of small arms and light weapons in the commission of criminal acts in Trinidad and Tobago are considered to be on the increase in a growing number of areas, among these, drug-related violence, male dominated gang warfare with serious implications for the female population, youth violence even in schools, organized crime, insurrection and random street crimes



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against private citizens. Notably, small arms and light weapons also feature among standard equipment used by terrorists.

Trinidad and Tobago is a non-producer of firearms and the prevalence of firearms can only be attributed to transshipment activities occasioned by the phenomenon of illegal diversion. As a consequence illicit small arms and light weapons enter Trinidad and Tobago surreptitiously at authorized as well as non-official ports of entry.

Mr. Chairman, it is essentially as a consequence of this recognized vulnerability, which is further exacerbated by our marine frontiers and indented coastline that Government has placed utmost priority on a policy to strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's aerial and maritime surveillance capacities: by augmenting its assets in those areas and developing human resources in all aspects of border control capabilities among the defense, law enforcement, customs, immigration and related regulatory communities.

Mr. Chairman, Government is fully cognizant of the deleterious potential of the illicit movement of small arms and light weapons, among these, the possible negative impact on the economy precipitated by a loss of investor confidence; adverse effects on youth-at-risk and this includes victims as well as offenders, fragmentation of communities, compromises to personal, domestic and



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regional security, the further fuelling of the drug trade and the overall rise in both the incidence and lethality of criminality.

Mr. Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago's institutional framework to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is being bolstered on all fronts. In 1996, the Strategic Services Agency was set up as the legally constituted entity that would serve as a recognized locus both nationally and internationally to co-ordinate drug interdiction and related serious crime initiatives. The illicit trade in firearms is one of the 15 identified strategic priorities engaging this Agency under the country's National Strategy to Eliminate the Illicit Production and Trafficking of Drugs Produced Naturally and Synthetically and Promote Control Measures (2005-2009). The Strategy of itself was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in January 2005.

Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Related Materials and is actively pursuing the ratification of this Convention. Amendments to the country's Firearms Act Chapter 16.01 were made as recently as 2004 with the enactment of Act No. 3 of 2004. Further reviews of the parent Act are aimed at increasing penalties even further under summary conviction and indictment, institutionalizing more stringent controls over legal custody of firearms and the acquisition of licenses by would-be holders, regulating the establishment of ranges and the



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maintenance of data bases for both licensed and unlicensed weapons. Measures have also been taken by government to conform with the mandates of the International Shipping and Port Security Code to ensure that the new global requirements have been satisfied. It is clearly recognized that enforcement measures must be complemented with initiatives aimed at securing our aerial and marine borders.

Regionally, Trinidad and Tobago has adopted a multilateral approach to these issues. The Secretariat to the CARICOM Task Force on Crime and Security is based in the capital, Port of Spain and fully financed by the Government. In 2004, the Task Force in collaboration with the Centre for Peace and Disarmament for Latin America and the Caribbean facilitated a regional training programme hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Defense Force. The Task Force has a central role to play in illicit arms control at regional level and is therefore regarded as the recognized locus of multilateral efforts, which enjoys the collective political support of Heads of Government.

Mr. Chairman, cognizant of the effect of the illicit movement and trade in arms our country has been catalyzing efforts in a number of Task Force sub committees as follows:

- the development of a comprehensive and coordinated regional security plan;



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- formalization of measures that would facilitate increased intelligence and information sharing cross jurisdictionally;
- coordination of law reform and harmonizing of legal and judicial efforts; and
- pursuit without further delay of formalization and execution of maritime cooperation agreements.

Mr. Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that the only effective and realistic approach to the ultimate eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is by means of a strategic framework of affirmative measures domestically complemented by multilateral cooperation and resource mobilization regionally and within the wider global domain.

We take this opportunity to endorse the concerns and convictions being conveyed and recommit ourselves to building upon past and current global efforts in ridding the international community of this global menace.