

**Port of Spain Declaration of the Regional Meeting of
Civil Society Organisations and Parliamentarians on
Small Arms Proliferation and Misuse:
Towards a Caribbean Plan of Action
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
March 5-6, 2008**

Civil Society Organisations and Parliamentarians from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Brazil, Canada, Kenya and Trinidad and Tobago met in Port of Spain, Trinidad to review the impacts of and responses to small arms diffusion and violence in the Caribbean; learn from the good practices in other affected regions that have developed regional approaches to gun violence; explore development of a CARICOM instrument to support implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; and develop a Caribbean research agenda.

Reaffirming that CARICOM Member States have recognized the value of the UN Programme of Action on Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons;

Recognising that CARICOM Member States are signatories to other multilateral instruments such as the 1997 CIFTA convention on firearms, the 2006 Antigua Guatemala Declaration of Latin American and Caribbean States and the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development;

Applauding the establishment of the CARICOM Task Force on Crime and Security and the 2002 report of the Task Force;

Take note that the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons threatens the ability of Caribbean states to meet their Millennium Development Goals;

Recognising that youth violence is a high-priority, high-visibility concern across the Caribbean;

Acknowledging that youth are disproportionately represented in the incidence and severity of gun violence, especially young men, both as victims and as perpetrators of violent crimes;

Stressing that the impacts of illicit small arms and light weapons use in the Caribbean argue for a shared regional response;

Recognising that the equality of men and women is a *de jure* reality and that the *de facto* actuality produces a different experience;

Stressing that CARICOM Member States could boost annual economic growth per capita if they were to bring their homicide rates down;

Recognising that not only have levels of crime and violence increased, but so too has the use of small arms in criminal acts;

Acknowledging that the most common crimes perpetrated by minors are petty theft, use of drugs and assault and that arrests for homicide and illegal small arms have experienced the most consistent growth ;

Stressing that gender must be central to the analysis undertaken since the lives of Caribbean men and women are influenced by the gender disparities and structural inequalities which persist in many facets of Caribbean life;

Acknowledging that such inequalities act as vectors for many of the social ills which challenge regional development and that such inequity and inequality are manifest in several social ills which are exacerbated by cross cutting factors such as race and class;

Bearing in mind that a CARICOM declaration should contain a concrete and co-ordinated agenda for action to promote human security;

Recalling the centrality of ammunition in small arms misuse in the region;

Stressing the need for adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the manufacturing, possession, import, export and transshipment of small arms and light weapons and ammunition;

Recognising the paucity of information on the proliferation and impact of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects;

Acknowledging the importance of reducing the demand for small arms and light weapons;

Recalling that civilian possession of small arms increases proliferation and misuse and that civilians should not have access to military-style weapons of any kind;

Acknowledging the important role that women play as change agents in community, national and regional efforts to reduce small arms proliferation and to promote violence prevention;

Commit to collaboration between parliamentarians and civil society to respond to the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons;

Encourage CARICOM Member States to cooperate with international governments and civil society organisations to implement their commitments under all multilateral instruments relevant to the control, and reduction in the misuse, of small arms and light weapons;

Encourage CARICOM Member States to include ammunition in their small arms programming;

Call upon CARICOM Member States to develop an agreement to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects;

Express recognition and gratitude to the Women's Institute for Alternative Development and Project Ploughshares for their initiative in hosting this meeting;

Express recognition and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Canada for their technical and financial assistance in carrying out the meeting.

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