



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

**GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE**

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Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen states of the Caribbean Community that are members of the United Nations. I convey our congratulations to you and the members of the bureau on your election, and assure you of the full cooperation and support of our delegations as we address the important work of this Committee.

I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala and the staff of his Department for their continued stewardship.

This year will be remembered for the significant events that served to infuse new spirit in the dialogue on the maintenance of international peace and security, and that renewed collective commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The Declaration adopted by the Millennium Summit makes a strong call for concerted action toward the elimination of weapons of mass destruction; toward ending the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons; and toward eliminating the danger posed by landmines.

Most significant, however, was the outcome of the Sixth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which, among its achievements, secured an important undertaking from the nuclear weapon states for the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Emerging from a record of stalled negotiations and unfulfilled commitments, this indication of intent was indeed very welcome. We now look forward to seeing words transformed into demonstrable action. For there is still much to be done.

The particular concern of the CARICOM states remains the unrelenting illegal traffic in small arms which contributes significantly to the escalation and perpetuation of violence, not only in conflict and post-conflict areas, but also in

stable democracies such as our own. In the Caribbean, the traffic in illicit arms, fuelled mainly by the illegal drug trade continues unabated, undermining the security of our region, and destroying the social fabric of our communities. The proliferation of small arms in our societies is taking its toll not only on human life but on our development prospects. Concerted international action is urgently needed.

We therefore look forward to a meaningful outcome from the First International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons next year. This meeting must address decisively the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework defining national, regional and international measures to curb the illegal traffic in these arms. To this end, we encourage a constructive dialogue in the coming meetings of the Preparatory Committee, with a view to our reaching agreement on the scope and objective of the Conference.

In the meantime, we welcome initiatives which assist our governments in better understanding and controlling this problem. The activities of the UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America are worthy of special mention. The CARICOM states are greatly encouraged by the programme of work undertaken by the Centre since its revitalisation, particularly the seminars, workshops and other activities aimed at strengthening national and regional efforts to control the illegal flow of firearms. We applaud the Director on his establishing a cooperative programme with other regional entities, notably the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). Such collaboration promotes most efficient use of resources and the sharing of knowledge and expertise among agencies with similar regional scope.

The relationship with CICAD we consider a particularly useful one, since the Organisation of American States has been at the forefront of the battle against the illegal traffic in small arms in the region, with the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in

Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials. CARICOM states participated in the Centre's workshop in Martinique this year, to promote greater understanding of CICAD's model regulations for the control of the international movement of firearms. We look forward to participating more fully in the activities in the coming year, and we encourage increased voluntary contributions in support of the valuable work of the Centre.

Mr Chairman,

CARICOM states note with satisfaction the progress achieved in the decreased production of anti-personnel landmines, in the destruction of stockpiles, in the de-mining of land, and in the reduction of casualties from landmine explosives reported to the second meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Geneva last month. We consider this an encouraging indication of member states' commitment to full implementation of this Convention, made all the more worthy because of the overwhelming benefit reaped by civilian populations. We continue to call for more assistance to those states addressing the difficult task of de-mining, and for the support of the victims of landmine explosions.

Mr. Chairman,

The positive outcome of the NPT Review Conference has provided the flagging nuclear non-proliferation process with a fresh point of departure, which we hope will lead to constructive engagement on the crucial issues on the disarmament agenda. We continue to underscore the importance of the universality of the NPT, and the need for early ratification of the CTBT. We look forward to the start of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament next year. We will also wait to see whether there are other dividends to be gained through the implementation of interim confidence-building measures on the part of nuclear weapon states, such as the de-alerting of nuclear warheads, the adoption of legally binding commitments on negative security assurances for non-nuclear weapon states, and the ceding of the right to 'first use' of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM states consider particularly important the conclusions and recommendations of the NPT Review Conference regarding the strengthening of measures and international regulations to protect states from the risks associated with the maritime transportation of radioactive material. Our concerns regarding the threat to our subregional marine environment posed by the transshipment of irradiated reactor fuel through the Caribbean Sea are well known.

We continue to call for the cessation of this practice. This position notwithstanding, we reiterate the need for the international community to consider the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework promoting greater state responsibility in such areas as disclosure, liability and compensation in relation to accidents.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM states continue to support the convening of the Fourth Special Session on Disarmament. We share the view that SSOD IV would make a valuable contribution toward ensuring transparency in the consultative process for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We believe it would also promote confidence building and serve to strengthen the role of the UN in such areas as verification and compliance. We therefore encourage renewed consideration of the convening of SSOD IV within the Disarmament Commission.

CARICOM states also recognise the important contribution of nuclear weapon-free zones toward strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and in promoting regional security and stability. We maintain that their success is to be found in their establishment on the basis of agreements freely reached among the states of the region concerned. We remain committed to the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco to which we are party and encourage the development of mechanisms aimed at promoting cooperation

among zones, with a view to strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Chairman,

The tenor of our debate has been set by the NPT Review and the Millennium Summit. We find ourselves with a fortuitous opportunity to re-direct our dialogue and to jump-start our negotiations to make meaningful progress on the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation agenda. If only we would find the political will to do so. Let us not squander this opportunity.