



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

TO THE

***FIRST BIENNIAL MEETING OF STATES TO CONSIDER 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, JULY 7, 2003

Madame Chairperson,

Jamaica joins with previous delegations in congratulating you on your election to chair this important Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the 2001 UN Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. We are confident that under your capable leadership, this meeting will be a success. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Madame Chairperson,

Jamaica fully supports the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in 2001, particularly as it relates to the establishment of a worldwide mechanism to facilitate the marking and tracing of weapons, which will enable States to track the movement of illicit small arms across borders.

My delegation also takes this opportunity to commend the members of the Group of Experts for the work they have been doing to strengthen the implementation of the Programme.

Madame Chairperson,

Jamaica is particularly supportive of the Programme of Action and hopeful, that this UN initiative will be successful as, over the past decade, we have seen a dramatic increase in the inflow and proliferation of illicit guns across our shores.

When viewed in combination with the drug trade, and also taking into account Jamaica's proximity to the lucrative markets of North America and Europe, the effects of the illicit trade in small arms on our society have been most harmful.

Jamaica does not manufacture guns or ammunition. However, the constant fight for turf and to secure the profits from the drug trade have witnessed significant growth in the use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) by drug barons and their henchmen as a means of control, a process in which the lives of innocent citizens, particularly young people, have been snuffed out through wanton and indiscriminate acts of violence perpetrated by criminal gunmen.

Narco-traffickers from North, South and Central America often supply guns in tandem with the supply of drugs as part of the payment for their illegal cargo. These weapons make their way into the hands of young people who wreak havoc on our citizens in an effort to gain control and financial power.

As an island state, Jamaica is vulnerable to traffickers penetrating our extensive coastline, despite the best efforts of our security forces. Even when the official ports

of entry are used for this traffic, the methods used are extremely ingenious, making detection difficult at times.

Madame Chairperson, in spite of the monumental challenges faced by my country, Jamaica realizes the importance of the need to curb the illicit trafficking of arms and the Programme of Action offers us an opportunity for such action.

In this regard, Jamaica has been attempting to strengthen its borders by first tightening security at the major Ports of Entry. New surveillance equipment has been installed at our ports to monitor the movement of both cargo and persons.

Further, the government recently took steps to acquire a supply of x-ray machines capable of scanning all inbound, outbound or transit containers, for the detection of SALWs or other dangerous goods.

Our Coast Guard has also recently benefitted from the provision of "go-fast" boats to assist in the patrol of our coastline in pursuit of narco-traffickers and we take the opportunity here to express appreciation to our bilateral partners for their assistance in the acquisition of vessels and equipment and also for their cooperation in the surveillance of our maritime space.

The Government of Jamaica has also implemented stringent measures to monitor the movement of dangerous cargo throughout our territorial waters and into our Ports.

Shipping agents are required to provide to the Security Authorities, pre-notification of ships which are carrying such cargo, especially SALWs, and must include all export, import and transshipment documents for approval, prior to said ships being allowed to offload or transfer containers in the port facilities. The consignor and consignee details, country of origin, country of final destination and all the requisite permits from all relevant National Security agencies must be produced, or permission will not be granted for the vessel to use our port facilities.

The security forces must be notified of such vessels and their cargo and 24-hour protection is provided for containers that are in transit overnight or longer.

National Legislation

Jamaica is a signatory to the Transnational Organized Crime Convention and the Protocol relating to the illicit manufacture, production and trafficking of firearms and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials.

The Firearms Act, which governs the licensing of firearms in Jamaica, is currently being reviewed to strengthen its control of weapons in an effort to bring it in line with the Conventions and the requirements of the Programme of Action.

Policy objectives include facilitating a complete inventory and audit of all licenced firearms; establishing standards for the issuance of firearms licences and a review of the appeals procedure; and the entire administrative procedure for the application for a firearm.

A new Port Security Act is to be passed shortly which will strengthen security at our ports of entry.

The recently introduced Corruption Prevention Act, monitored by a Corruption Commission, will assist the government in identifying and taking action against those public officials who are caught participating in or facilitating persons involved in illegal criminal activities, inclusive of the importation of illegal weapons, which are detrimental to the peace and security of the State.

Record-Keeping

The Jamaica Constabulary Force currently maintains records in a central location, of all legal firearm permit holders who are required on an annual basis to renew their licences.

Destruction of Weapons

Madame Chairperson, as part of the implementation of the Programme of Action, Jamaica, in 2002, destroyed over 1,430 illegal weapons seized over a number of years. These efforts at destruction are expected to continue but are dependent on the rate of recovery of illegal weapons by our security forces during their operations.

Between 1998 and 2002, the Jamaican Police recovered some 2,498 illegal weapons. Destruction of these weapons will also take place but has been delayed as most of these weapons are currently involved in criminal litigation cases before the courts.

Public Relations

The efforts of the Government of Jamaica and the police force to engage citizens in the fight against the use of illegal weapons are tremendous. The use of publications, radio, television, print media and bill board advertising using ordinary citizens, public and private sector officials, entertainers and sports personalities to appeal to the public to report the use of illegal guns in exchange for financial reward, has had positive effects on the security forces recovering such weapons and arresting the guilty parties.

Education programmes in schools conducted by the police is also extensively used. In addition, there is collaboration with the private sector which sponsors a reward scheme called "get the guns" that gives a monetary award for information leading to

the recovery of illegal guns. The private sector also sponsors a monthly programme on the radio that allows for direct interaction between senior officials of the Police and the public.

Difficulty of Implementation

Madame Chairperson,

Jamaica has made progress in its efforts to implement the Programme of Action, but admittedly, shortcomings exist.

The most prominent constraint which we face is the lack of human and financial resources and capacity to carry out the necessary work for implementation.

In this regard, Madame Chairperson, Jamaica would welcome any assistance which would further support and facilitate our efforts to implement the Programme of Action.

Conclusion

Madame Chairperson, Jamaica is committed to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action, particularly in small vulnerable states like ours affected by the inflow of drugs and guns and the devastating effects we have experienced over the past decade.

Jamaica is particularly keen on seeing a common mechanism developed in marking and tracing of all weapons manufactured and exported to enable states to track their movement and to dismantle those transnational criminal organizations and individuals involved in their trade. We in Jamaica, unfortunately, know too well the destruction and devastation that the use of illegal weapons has had on our society, both in terms of human loss and the traumatic social and financial problems created by the negative impact on households, and the forced abandonment of certain communities by citizens whose lives have been endangered by violence connected with the drug trade.

I thank you Madame Chairperson.