



**National Statement
The Commonwealth of The Bahamas
General Debate
Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty
17 to 21 August, 2020**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, allow me first to extend my appreciation for your efforts to convene the 6th Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty during a novel pandemic. While these are undoubtedly trying times, our work must continue. It is, therefore, encouraging that innovative means are being effectively pursued to ensure the continuity of our commitments toward the regulation of conventional arms.

One of the many lessons of COVID-19 is the reminder of the interrelationships between problems and solutions. The emergence of this virus into the human population does not represent just a “health” problem – it has impacted every sector and service to which we have become accustomed. Similarly, it has as its origins no one singular cause. It is through understanding spillover causes and effects that help us to find concrete remedies to our most pressing challenges. These connections are most clearly demonstrated through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agenda 2030 remains a cornerstone to promote sustainable development in The Bahamas. It has long been recognised that the SDGs and the Arms Trade Treaty share common goals. Along with goal 16: peace, justice and strong institutions, complementarity also exists across goals relating to poverty, gender equality, economic growth and reduced inequalities, among others. Progress in arms trade regulation advances progress in these goals and vice versa.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas cannot overstate the importance it attaches to the Arms Trade Treaty. As a Small Island Developing State geographically located in a strategic route for the transshipment of conventional arms and related trans-organised criminal activity, the illicit trade and use of small arms and light weapons represents an enormous challenge nationally and within the region. Despite ongoing crime prevention efforts, COVID-19 has exacerbated the impact of the illicit use of small arms and light weapons. Unemployment, national lockdowns, extreme fiscal uncertainty and multiple strains on social services all contribute to increasing tensions in households and communities that give rise to ripe conditions for gun-related crime. Of particular concern for The Bahamas is the link between gun-related crime and domestic violence. Gender-based and intimate partner violence, and, violence against children and persons in vulnerable groups, are opportunities for the extreme escalation of harm against the individual.

It is against this backdrop that the ATT operates. As a non-exporting State with limited conventional arm importation, The Bahamas heavily relies on the full and transparent implementation of the Treaty and its associated programmes, protocols and instruments. In this regard, The Bahamas welcomes the recent ratifications to the Treaty and lends its overwhelming support for the universalisation of the ATT. Likewise, The Bahamas fully supports the Voluntary Trust Fund to assist national implementation of the Treaty as a valuable mechanism to promote both cooperation and engagement with Treaty obligations. The Bahamas also notes the importance of national reporting as a significant stock-taking exercise and a transparency and confidence building measure. Though The Bahamas has yet to submit its national reports to the ATT, it welcomes continued efforts to assist States with reporting obligations, including recent events held in the Caribbean last year.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and believes that its implementation can be adapted to be fully realised in our “new normal”. The Bahamas remains steadfast in its pledge to support the international community in pursuit of a safe and peaceful world.