

Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on your election and assure you of the full cooperation and support of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda as we wish you a successful Fifth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Antigua and Barbuda, as with other CARICOM Member States, is neither a manufacturer nor large importer of conventional weapons; however, the region accounts for some of the highest murder rates in the world from the use of small arms. The illicit arms trade constitutes a huge impediment to peace and security and for Antigua and Barbuda, in fully achieving its sustainable development goals. The ATT give us an additional tool to reduce human suffering, to eradicate criminality and to reduce violence caused by the relatively easy access to acquiring illegal arms and ammunition.

The problem of illegal weapons is closely linked to transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking and money laundering, and the Caribbean region is engaged in efforts to combat the effects of these scourges. Limited resources are redirected from improving economic and social situations and then diverted to addressing security and monitoring systems due to the presence of illegal weapons in our territories.

As a small nation with porous borders, Antigua and Barbuda calls on all States Parties to take greater steps to cooperate and exchange information in order to mitigate the risk of diversion. We call on all States to robustly and faithfully implement the ATT obligations which seek to address the matter of unauthorized end use, and to share information on policies and practices that could help prevent this situation. Addressing diversion requires a

comprehensive approach that would enable States to tackle this pervasive issue, including effective inter-agency cooperation.

Antigua and Barbuda is thankful to the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund for supporting a workshop implemented by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and civil society organization, the 'Caribbean Coalition for the Reduction of Armed Violence', to focus on reporting and further ATT implementation in the CARICOM region. Representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia and the Republic of Suriname all participated in the workshop which was hosted in Antigua and Barbuda from 13th – 15th August and produced the, 'St. John's Declaration of Commitment'. The declaration recalled CARICOM's internationally recognized role in the negotiation, adoption and entry into force of the ATT, and acknowledged the need for CARICOM Member States as States Parties to the ATT, to accelerate their implementation of the Treaty in order to access and enjoy the rights and benefits of being States Parties. As a result of the workshop, Antigua and Barbuda is pleased to communicate that reporting has increased and CARICOM Member States are making arrangements to meet their financial obligations.

We welcome the focus on gender and gender-based violence as the thematic priority of this Conference. We further welcome this initiative from the Latvian Presidency, including the non-paper and its focus on gender balance in representation, the gendered impact of armed violence and

conflict, and gender-based violence and risk assessment under Articles 6 and 7 of the ATT.

To conclude, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to a successful CSP5 with full engagement in this process as we recognise that the ATT provides an excellent mechanism for collaborative efforts at the multilateral level to address the issues which are negatively impacting our country and by extension, CARICOM Member States disproportionately.