

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by Miss Cherryl Gordon,
Minister/Deputy Permanent Representative of Jamaica
to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva
to the
Second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)
Geneva, 22nd – 26th August, 2016**

23rd August, 2016

Mr. President,

Jamaica thanks you and the ATT Secretariat for organising this Second Conference of States Parties. We also thank the Government of Switzerland for hosting the Conference.

Jamaica is honoured to have been an active participant in the ATT process, which was a logical step in our longstanding commitment to the broader issue of arms control. Jamaica's Firearms Act (to control the manufacture, sale, purchase, importation, exportation, transshipment, disposal, possession and use of firearms and ammunition) was first promulgated in 1947 – three years after the end of World War II and fifteen years before we attained Independence from Great Britain. The Act was amended in 1967 and again in 2005 – the latest iteration establishing the Firearm Licensing Authority, a statutory body within the Ministry of National Security. The new law and related policy has primarily been focused on improving transparency and efficiency in the process of granting firearm licenses – because, contrary to some misinformed sources, the Government of Jamaica does indeed sanction the controlled use of small arms among private citizens. In this regard, the role of the Firearm Licensing Authority is to educate and train gun-owners about the proper usage, storage and disposal of firearms and ammunition, as well as to conduct audits of private security firms, dealers, range operators and trainers.

Licensed firearm holders may - and do - have their licenses suspended or revoked and their firearms confiscated if they are deemed to have breached the rules governing the ownership, possession and responsible use of such firearms, or even if they are deemed to be temporarily in an emotionally-unfit state to possess a firearm. The vast majority of these citizens, however, do not pose a threat to the peace and security of their fellow Jamaicans, as they are subject to a rigorous screening process, which includes a test of their competence to possess such firearms.

Further, the Jamaica Rifle Association and Skeet Club have several members who demonstrate high levels proficiency in the use of firearms at both the local and international levels, hence our participation in several competitions across the world. Unfortunately,

however, Jamaica was not able to participate in the recently held Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. In the light of the robust nature of Jamaica's Regulatory Framework, it is possible for us to find that delicate balance between the recreational use of firearms and gun control.

In spite of our successes, Jamaica continues to experience an undesirable influx of illegal firearm and ammunition into our Island. This influx is primarily perpetrated by organized criminal gangs and is aimed at organised criminal activities, where the guns are usually traded for narcotics, food items and the proceeds derived from sale. Also, based on information provided by the Security Forces, several of these illicit firearms are of a higher calibre and are more sophisticated than the firearms used by Law Enforcement, Private Security as well as Licensed Firearm Holders. Such firearms in the hands of organized criminals have served to exacerbate Jamaica's homicide rate, which is currently 41 per 100,000. In 2015, firearms were responsible for more than 80 per cent of all homicides. And yet, there is no Civil War in Jamaica.

Unfortunately, this situation, in spite of our best efforts, continues to thrive due to many factors, including porous borders, resource constraints, poor socio-economic conditions, and lack of effective collective action at the international level, to reduce illicit arms trafficking.

Most importantly, the illicit trade contributes to a climate of persistent fear and insecurity among many Jamaicans, which contributes to the undermining of socio-economic growth and stability of the country and continues to stymie foreign direct investment. It has also been observed that the youths in certain segments of society often resort to the use of the firearm to settle simple disputes, rather than to engage in dialogue and problem-solving, which further exacerbates Jamaica's crime situation.

Jamaica's ratification of the ATT in June 2014 was directly informed by these realities and also, by our recognition of Jamaica's role in contributing to the responsible global trade in conventional arms and the consequences of failing to do so. We urge other States Parties and those States who remain outside of the Treaty – to understand their responsibilities in curbing this global scourge.

Mr. President,

Jamaica takes this opportunity to commend the EU's Outreach Project, implemented by the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA), which has assisted countries like Jamaica with the implementation of the ATT, in accordance with Articles 15 and 16 of the Treaty. Several activities were conducted under the Assistance Package between the period 2015 and 2016, which focused on the areas of enforcement capabilities, sanctions, licensing best practices and inter-agency co-operation, among other areas.

In furtherance of our commitment to implementing the ATT, Jamaica is in the process of amending an existing Regulatory Framework, to include at minimum the requirements of the Treaty, in pursuit of honouring our obligations, as well as demonstrating collective

responsibility in regulating the trade of conventional arms. However, in the interim, the trade of conventional arms in the Jamaican jurisdiction is regulated by the Ministry of National Security, with the support of the Firearm Licensing Authority. Secondary support is also provided by the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Jamaica Customs Agency, Trade Board Limited, Port Authority of Jamaica, Airport Authority of Jamaica and to a lesser extent, the Jamaica Defence Force.

Jamaica has completed and submitted its Initial Report as well as its first Annual Report under the ATT, thus satisfying our obligations under Article 13 of the Treaty.

Jamaica's current assessment is that our full and effective implementation of the ATT will be possible if we build on these measures and assistance granted; specifically, through additional assistance to:

- 1) Sensitize Jamaican public servants and citizens on various aspects of the Treaty; and
- 2) Acquire equipment/tools to assist in the detection, interception and seizure of conventional arms at Jamaica's ports of entry.

Jamaica looks forward to continued collaboration with the international community, as we seek to better regulate the trade in small arms worldwide, and in the process, create more peaceful and stable societies.

I thank you.

*Permanent Mission of Jamaica
Geneva*