Small Arms and Light Weapons

Illegal firearms feature in many of the crimes of violence and homicides committed in CARICOM Member States. CARICOM’s response has been one of heightened priority on discussion agendas and has articulated its support of the United Nations Programme of Action (PoA) as one of the primary international instruments for the controls of small arms and light weapons.

Approval

In addressing the issues relating to the implementation of the UN PoA, the Meeting of the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE) in April 2008 and May 2009 the Conference of Heads of Government Meeting in July 2009 urged CARICOM Member States which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Firearms Protocol. States were also encouraged to meet their obligations under the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearm and other related Materials (CIFTA).

Additionally, the CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) which was agreed to at the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government in July 2001 sought to implement all necessary actions at the national and regional level to fully combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in alignment with international instruments. This includes the development and implementation of national action plans, capacity building within national and regional security entities and implementation and enforcement of policies and legislation.

The development of an Arms Trade Treaty was a key priority for the Region which was demonstrated by the CARICOM Member States support for General Assembly (GA) Resolution A/61/89. CARICOM Member States supported the establishment of an ATT, which was a clear indication of the political will of CARICOM governments to tackle small arms and light weapons. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was adopted in 2013 at the United Nations (U.N) General Assembly, as a globally binding instrument to combat the irresponsible and illicit proliferation and transfer of illegal arms and ammunition through the highest possible common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. The goal of the ATT is to reduce the illicit trade and diversion of weapons and ammunitions, which ultimately fuels criminality and impedes socio-economic development.

Key Components include:-
- Improvement in the quality and management of information in the field of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) through national action plans, capacity development and legislation
- Sensitization of Member States on the ATT
- Identification of the specific areas of technical assistance and support Member States will need in order to ratify the treaty.
- Coordination of technical assistance and support in areas such as training to advance enforcement of the ATT by Member States.

**Collaboration with partners to reduce the proliferation of SALW:**

**End User Control systems to prevent diversion of firearms:**

UNIDIR and CARICOM IMPACS co-hosted a Sub Regional Consultative Meeting at the CARICOM IMPACS Headquarters, (19 Keate Street, Port of Spain) from 21-22 September 2016. The objective of this Meeting was to support CARICOM Member States to strengthen Small Arms and Light Weapons (firearms) End Use/r control systems and to identify possible approaches to enhance cooperation to reduce diversion of firearms. Participation included the United Nations Institute of Disarmament Research (UNIDIR); CARICOM IMPACS; United States of America and Senior Law Enforcement representatives from CARICOM Member States, including, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Bermuda.

**CARICOM Model Law on the Arms Trade Treaty and UN PoA:**

This project, completed in the first quarter in 2016, through funding from United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulations (UNSCAR), was aimed at strengthening the ability of CARICOM Member States to ratify and implement the ATT and UNPoA. The Model Law was drafted and has been forwarded by the CARICOM Secretariat via Savinggram for adoption by Member States. Member States are now required to enact legislation according to the Model to give effect to their national obligation under the Treaty.

**Training for National Points of Contact on the ATT and UN PoA:**

CARICOM IMPACS hosted two (2) Workshops (Trinidad and Tobago – January 2017 and Antigua and Barbuda – February 2017) aimed to combat the illicit trade and diversion of weapons within the CARICOM Region. The project which targeted national points of contact from CARICOM Member States highlighted the absence and implications of an adherence to international
standards on the transfer of conventional arms, in particular small arms and light weapons (SALW) and associated ammunition. This shortfall in regulation and enforcement can be exploited by arms dealers and therefore the capacities of Member States to enforce small arms controls must be strengthened through capacity development and training. As such, the training is expected to increase the submission of National Reports on the implementation of the UN PoA and ATT provisions and raise participation of Member States at United Nations meetings of the Biennial States.