

## **Small Arms and Light Weapons**

### ***Background***

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.

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 InterAmerican 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.

In support of the ATT IMPACS has collaborated with several partners to reduce the proliferation of SALW. Key collaborations included:

- 1. CARICOM Regional INTERPOL Firearms Training Course Bridgetown, Barbados (June 24th – 28th, 2019)***

CARICOM IMPACS, in partnership with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) delivered two (2) Regional Firearms Training Courses for INTERPOL's National Central Bureau (NCB) and Caribbean National Firearms Experts on the use of key firearms tools.

More than sixty (60) representatives of NCB and Caribbean national firearms experts received advanced training on key INTERPOL global policing capabilities, including its Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS), INTERPOL Ballistic Information Network (IBIN) and the INTERPOL Firearms Reference Table (IFRT).

Officials from the following eleven (11) participating states of INTERPOL and other regional organizations attended the First Training Course from June 24th - 26th, 2019. They included: Anguilla, The Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, The British Virgin Islands, The Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Suriname, The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) as well as the Regional Security System(RSS), Joint Regional Communications Centre (JRCC) and the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre(RIFC). Officials from the following nine (9) participating states of INTERPOL participated in the Second Training Course from June 26th - 28th, 2019: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

Funded by CARICOM IMPACS, the initiative ensured that INTERPOL's tools and training expertise are in synergy with CARICOM IMPACS' Firearms Assistance Package to provide technical assistance and enhance the capabilities of law enforcement officers in the Caribbean to prevent and combat firearms crimes, particularly illicit firearms trafficking. It should be emphasized that more trainings as these will be undertaken as they will assist in capacity building to help member states in increasing the rate of detection.

**2. *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 in 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.

**3. *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.

**4. *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.