



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

685 3rd Ave., Suite 1108, New York, NY 10017 • Tel: (212) 599-0950 • Fax: (212) 599-1020 •

svgmission@gmail.com | <http://svg-un.org>

Statement

by

H.E. I. Rhonda King

Permanent Representative

Small Arms

United Nations Security Council

5 February 2020

New York

Please check against delivery

Thank you, Mr. President, and thanks to both our briefers this morning.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has a front-row seat to the damage that the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons can cause. Even though the Caribbean does not produce arms itself, the illicit traffic of small arms profoundly affects our region.

Security Council Resolution 2220 underscored that small arms and light weapons are “*the most frequently used weapons in the majority of recent armed conflicts*”. The illicit flow of small arms fuels conflict, terrorism, and crimes around the world and thereby threatens international peace and security.

Let us cite a recent example. In August 2019, the Government of Chad closed the border that they share with Sudan in response to the illegal entry of small arms and light weapons. These weapons are easier and cheaper to access in Sudan. In Chad the presence of these weapons contributed to escalating inter-community violence in the region. Unfortunately, situations like these are not isolated events. Around the world, we see that the increased presence of small arms and light weapons is directly related to increased violence. The Secretary General put it best when he stated that the illicit trade of small arms continues to “*exacerbate ongoing conflicts and contribute to the outbreak of others.*”

Mr. President,

Trafficking in small arms and light weapons cannot be divorced from other forms of trafficking that provoke tensions between rival groups who compete for power

and profit. The illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources and wildlife form part of the same political economy as the illicit arms trade. These complex webs of criminality operate across borders as they often thrive on the fringes of state authority. The strength of these networks, however, begets their greatest weakness. They can only flourish in the absence of a well-organized governance framework. Regional and sub-regional organizations and their member states must work collectively to manage their shared borders and regulate the movements of people.

On the African continent, the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons has taken its toll on far too many generations of people. Our delegation welcomes the ongoing initiatives toward *"Silencing the Guns"* in Africa. We remind, however, that key mechanisms like the Nairobi Protocol and the Kinshasa Convention will only bear success if they are accompanied by structural economic developments.

We cannot pursue sustainable development where we do not have peace. Increasingly, armed conflicts in destabilized regions are moving out of battlefields into villages, towns, and cities where civilians are deeply affected. This creates humanitarian crises that endanger the most vulnerable. Indeed, the gendered implications and gendered violence occasioned by small arms use cannot be ignored and should not be minimized. We cannot sit idly by as these disturbing trends to continue.

Mr. President,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a State Party to the Arms Trade Treaty, appreciates that member states have the right to order their internal affairs as they

see fit, including in the area of arms control. However, this right is not absolute when domestic policies have negative implications beyond borders.

Given the nature of small arms trafficking, regional cooperation is critical. As a member of the Caribbean Community, we reiterate CARICOM's 2011 declaration on small arms and light weapons. The Caribbean Community has vowed to *“support the implementation and enforcement of policies and legislation against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons”*. We encourage the efforts that are being taken at a regional level around the world.

Small arms and illicit weapons have been the concern of the international community for years, however, now is the time for concerted action. Across the world, small arms find their way into countries that do not even produce them and wreak havoc on vulnerable communities within them. It is time to enforce greater accountability.

Thank you.