



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

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Statement

By

**H.E. Dr. Halimah DeShong
Deputy Permanent Representative**

Open Debate: “The impact of diversion and trafficking of arms for peace and security”

United Nations Security Council

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Thank you Mr. President,

I wish to join in extending a special welcome to you and to Minister Bhattacharyya to the Security Council. I thank the briefers for their timely interventions, and I commend you, Mr. President, for Mexico's efforts to further the discussion on this important issue.

Twenty years after the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, and six years following Security Council Resolution 2220, the most vulnerable among us continue suffer the grave consequences of inaction to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons continues to contribute to instability, and fuel conflicts across the globe. On the African continent, in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, the Central African region, the Horn of Africa, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya, illicit weapons flows have enabled terrorism, violent extremism and intensified inter-communal tensions. We unfortunately see a further example in Haiti, in our own Caribbean and Latin American "Zone of Peace."

Undoubtedly, illicit weapons flows have also contributed to humanitarian and refugee crises, internal displacement, and have undermined the rule of law and fragile democratic institutions. We therefore underscore the necessity of strengthening the mandates of the Security Council, recognizing the destabilizing role of the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons as drivers of conflict and instability.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a State Party to the Arms Trade Treaty, appreciates that member states have the sovereign right to determine their internal affairs, including in the area of arms control. However, this right is not absolute when the negative implications of domestic policies, such as permissive gun laws, transcend national borders. In the Caribbean Community, we continue to be severely impacted by irresponsible and illicit weapons flows, despite the fact that we do not manufacture small arms and light weapons, and we do not import them on a large scale.

As such, to effectively combat the destructive impact of small arms and light weapons globally, there ought to be greater national responsibility assumed by manufacturing states, as well as coordinated and strengthened partnerships between organs and agencies of the United Nations, and regional, subregional and interregional organizations, in line with resolution 2457.

There exists numerous treaties, legislative frameworks and instruments aimed at managing and mitigating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. However, these mechanisms must be mobilized by states and organizations to concretize efforts to protect societies, and to promote sustainable development, especially in countries that continue to experience fluctuating periods of insecurity and instability. We therefore remain fully supportive of important arrangements such as the African Union's "Silencing the Guns" initiative, the regional road map for the Western Balkans, and CARICOM's Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean, in a Sustainable Manner, by 2030, which we have accelerated.

It is imperative that the international community fully support collaborative mechanisms and institutions for the tracing, management and secure storage of weapons and ammunition, as well as efforts aimed at sensitization, and the collection and destruction of illicit small arms and light weapons. Post-conflict settings in particular, require state institutions to bolster confidence and stability through ownership of security, development and security sector reform.

Further, we emphasize the importance of the full and effective participation of civil society, women and youth in all efforts to build national capacity and institutional and policy frameworks to effectively support disarmament, demobilisation, security sector reform and reintegration programs.

Illicit arms flows create cross-cutting multidimensional challenges that hinder our achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Further, the disproportionate threat posed to women and children is alarming. No state is exempt, and collective action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in all its aspects, at all levels, is urgently required to ensure international peace and security.

Thank you.