



**Remarks by the EU Ambassador, Aad BIESEBROEK, Regional Caribbean**  
**Workshop on Promoting Engagement of Women Parliamentarians in**  
**Addressing the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons**

**Hyatt Regency Hotel, Trinidad and Tobago**

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2019.**

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**Speaking Points**

Illicit small arms and light weapons continue to contribute to instability and armed violence, thwarting sustainable development and crisis management efforts, further destabilising entire regions, the states therein and their societies, fuelling armed violence and organised crime, and amplifying the impact of terrorist attacks.

Given this reality, in November 2018, the Council of the EU adopted a joint proposal for a comprehensive EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition, "*Securing arms, protecting citizens*".

The purpose of the Strategy is to guide integrated, collective and coordinated European action to prevent and curb the illicit acquisition of SALW and their ammunition by terrorists, criminals and other unauthorised actors, and to promote accountability and responsibility with regards to the legal arms trade.

This Strategy which replaces the strategy adopted in 2005, takes into account the evolved security context, including the threat of terrorism inside the EU and developments in SALW design and technology, affecting the capacity of governments to address the threat. It also takes into account the guiding principles of the 2016 EU Global Strategy that requires an integrated approach

across external policies, between Member States and EU Institutions and between the internal and external policy dimensions.

The Strategy also considered the outcome of the third review conference of the UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. This document outlines the concerns about the negative impact of the illicit trade in SALW on the lives of women, men, girls and boys and recognises that eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a key part of combatting gender based violence. It also identifies the need for strengthened participation of women in decision making and implementation processes relating to the Programme of Action.

The Strategy also took into consideration the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, which affirms that combatting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is necessary for the achievement of many goals, including those relating to peace, justice and strong institutions, poverty reduction, economic growth, health, gender equality and safe cities and communities

I'm aware that one of the objectives of this workshop is to discuss how we can promote greater engagement by female decision-makers in this process. **The EU believes that the active and equal participation of and leadership of women in all decision making and action, at all levels is crucial for achieving peace, security and sustainable development. In addition, the promotion of gender equality, awareness of gender issues, and empowerment of women and prevention of gender based violence is an important cross cutting priority for the EU**

Therefore, we have included guidelines to address issues affecting women and gender on our Small Arms and Light Weapons Strategy and its implementation

- **One of the guiding principles of the EU Strategy on SALW is incorporating gender and diversity aspects in SALW – controlled projects and actions.**

This is done through our International Cooperation and Assistance, by systematically mainstreaming gender considerations in the design of new projects relating to the fight against gun violence and SALW control in general,

and the sharing of good practices in this regard to address the risks of firearms being used in that context

- **The Council of the EU adopted a new EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security, with the aim to embed gender equality and women's empowerment in all EU external action.**

An EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security was endorsed to implement the Strategic Approach in the years 2019-2024. It was decided inter alia, that the EU would work towards increasing understanding of gender specific impacts of the illicit arms trade in small arms and light weapons.

- **EU Council Decision adopted in support of the gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse.**

This decision provides support for the development of a training manual, operationalisation of the modular small arms control compendium (MOSAIC) and training of UN staff and national officials in 18 countries on Africa, Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific on gender mainstreaming and small arms control. This project is managed by the UNODA.

In general, we believe that ATT States Parties should above all focus on the prevention of serious acts of gender based violence through enhanced implementation of the existing robust treaty provisions which require that the exporting state party, in its assessment before authorizing the export of conventional arms, should take into account the risk of the conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender based violence as serious acts of violence against women and children

Ladies and gentlemen, we are all aware that in this region, we have some major challenges with crime and insecurity, including a high incidence of family violence. We also know from the media reports that in a large number of cases small arms are used. It is therefore critical for all of us think about how given our respective roles we can to address these issues, during the next two days of deliberation.

I extend best wishes to all stakeholders and the organisers for a productive workshop.