**INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM (CICTE)**

TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION OEA/Ser.L/X.2.21

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REMARKS BY MS. TONYA T. AYOW, DIRECTOR (AG.), CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION AGENCY FOR CRIME AND SECURITY (CARICOM IMPACS),

DURING THE SECOND PLENARY SESSION AT THE TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM (CICTE)

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Good Afternoon and thank you Mr. Chairman, Honourable Minister Robeson Benn, Minister of Home Affairs, Guyana

Secretary General, H.E. Luis Almagro

Excellencies, CICTE National Points of Contact

Ms. Allison Treppel, Executive Secretary, CICTE

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Lt. Col. Michael Jones, Executive Director, CARICOM IMPACS, I wish to take the opportunity to thank you Mr. Chairman and the CICTE Secretariat for inviting CARICOM IMPACS here today to give a regional perspective on the topic at hand today.

How coincidental it is that I present here to you on how the CARICOM Region is seeking to address the threat of terrorism when yesterday, 6th October 2021, marked the 45th anniversary of the bombing of Cubana Flight 455 which exploded just off Paynes Bay, Barbados. Seventy-three persons lost their lives and among them were 11 Guyanese nationals. While it would be easy for me to say that CARICOM Member States have been largely spared from significant terrorist attacks, the Region is no stranger to acts of violence and extremism. Though not frequent, we however continue to be cognisant of the threat of violent extremism in our Region; even if presently, the assessed terrorist threat to this Region is at a low level. We also recognise that violent extremism and terrorism in today’s world are complex, multi-faceted challenges, that are not confined to national borders or physical spaces but transcend into cyber space. These activities have become more amorphous and difficult to detect without updated and upgraded systems.

Terrorists are increasingly exploiting digital spaces, including social media, encrypted communications and the dark web, to spread misinformation, recruit new followers and coordinate attacks. Technology and the use of the in­ter­net enables terrorist groups to reach anywhere in the world and spread violent extremism to a huge audience. Post 2001, focus was placed on Islamic Fundamentalism for understandable reasons, during and post pandemic, depending on what stage of the Pandemic one may perceive we are at, we have recognised that fundamentalism and extremism comes in all forms, in all beliefs and can manifest itself in various ways to come to the same goal: changing systems and governance through fear and violence.

For a region that is diverse in nature, where Tourism, Energy and Manufacturing means billions of US Dollars in GDP, any terror attack in the region could result in significant damage to destination attractiveness for not only tourism but direct investment resulting in devastating socio-economic cost to Member States economies. While violent extremism requires interventions to protect the security of people and assets, prevention of violent extremism needs to look beyond strict security concerns. Engagement is needed that prioritises a multidisciplinary and whole-of-society approach to prevention, based on human rights and the rule of law.

CARICOM IMPACS is heavily invested in preventing and countering violent extremism. In a relatively short period of time, CARICOM and its Member States have taken a number of bold and transformative measures, legislative and operational, in tackling violent extremism and terrorism, including strengthening border security and boosting cybersecurity, as well as improving information and intelligence exchange.

Beyond the adoption of the CARICOM Counter- Terrorism Strategy in February 2018 by Heads of Government of CARICOM, the region at both the national and regional levels have been committed to addressing the issue of terrorism, and have diligently implemented, a number of measures which has been informed by core principles embraced by the regional Strategy. These include: the promotion of democratic values; protection of human rights, adherence to the rule of law; fostering good governance; and mutual respect for and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. The Strategy reflects Member States commitment to jointly address, prevent and defeat the scourge of terrorism.

Please allow me to update this committee on some of the measures which have been undertaken nationally and regionally especially in the areas of legislative change, Terrorism Financing, Money Laundering, Asset Recovery, Cyber Security and Border Security.

1. With respect to legislative change, Member States have committed to changing their respective Counter Terrorism Legislation to adhere to the requirements of the UN Security Council’s resolutions 2178 and 2396. Trinidad and Tobago led the charge on this initiative and has one of the most updated pieces of legislation in the Region. This piece of legislation was used a regional model and currently many Member States are in the different stages of drafting and enactment utilising this model;
2. With respect to Counter Terrorism Financing, CARICOM IMPACS, Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have worked together to train over 2437 officers in all CARICOM Member States and Associate Members on Trade Based Money Laundering and identification of proceeds of crime inclusive of terrorism financing. We are also proud to say that the 2437 included officials from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Panama. While all Security Council resolutions are critical, perhaps the most pivotal has been UNSCR 2482 (2019) the recognition of the link between Transnational Organised Crime and Terorrism especially as it relates to Terrorism Financing and the issue of Asset Recovery;
3. With respect to Asset Recovery, IMPACS under the auspicies of the 11th European Development Fund, has commenced in August 2021 an assessment of the current Member States legislation and Agreement on the Sharing of Assets which will lead to the development of draft Model Civil Asset Recovery Legislation. This is being done in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat, Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) and Regional Security System (RSS), the latter of which facilitated this exercise some years earlier in the Eastern Caribbean. Additionally, an assessment of Asset Recovery Units was completed in the seven non-Regional Security System Member States through which technical assistance was received from the consultant on their respective issues and a workshop was hosted on National Asset Recovery Strategies. The seven asset recovery units will receive equipment support to enhance operations in early 2022;
4. Further to the development of the regional Cyber Security and Cybercrime Action Plan (CCSCAP) in 2016, CARICOM IMPACS has been working on behalf of Member States on a number of cybersecurity initiatives and have continued to partner with CICTE on some of these initiatives. Within the last year, not daunted by COVID-19 and using the virtual technology, CARICOM IMPACS conducted the following activities:
	1. Under the 11th EDF, the Agency hired a consultant to review Member States legislation on Cyber Security and Cyber Crime and through the identification of best practices as well as gaps, she developed a policy and legislative guidance document for the use of Member States. This document currently is serving as a pivotal document in the Digital Transformation Project supported by the World Bank and implemented by OECS and other partners including CARICOM IMPACS for Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
	2. Within the next two weeks, the Agency will be undertaking training of CARICOM Law Enforcement Officers and officials from the various judiciaries in areas such as threat intelligence, cyber investigations, digital forensics and regulations and standards, to name a few topics;
	3. Through current capacity in within IMPACS, we have worked with Prisons Departments training a number of persons on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime within prisons and the development of Cyber intelligence capabilities within the corrections domain;
	4. Presently we are working jointly with the Council of Europe (CoE) to provide legislative drafting guidance to CARICOM Member States, with a view of aligning Member States Cybercrime Legislation with Budapest Convention/Treaty on Cybercrime. We will also deliver training on cybercrime and cyber security to our judiciary professionals.
	5. Also, in 2022 based on the initial legislative review, targeted training will be developed and delivered to regional judiciary officials.

In the area of Border Security, CARICOM IMPACS continues to improve the Region’s border security mechanisms in support of national border security initiatives. Within the last year, the Agency continues to expand its footprint and Associate Members continue to join the system. We wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of United States of America for its continued support in this area and to indicate that during August 2021, the Automated Targeting System- Global (ATS-G) went live, thereby improving targeting capacity. Already, we have noted increased successes. We also take the opportunity to thank the Government of the United Kingdom and the European Union for their continued support as we seek to expand the Advance Passenger Information System. The next activities will focus on upgrading regional capacity to not only collect Advance Passenger Information but to collect Passenger Name Record data (PNR) which allows for even more enhanced targeting, intelligence collection and supports investigations especially where there are Transnational Organised Crime and terrorism threats. This will be done with the support of UN Office of Counter Terrorism with whom we signed an Agreement in January 2021 and the Government of the United States of America.

CARICOM has increased its Maritime Domain Awareness through the acquisition of a Maritime Domain Awareness system which allows for the identification of high-risk maritime vessels using the Automated Identification System. This system also enhances the Advance Cargo Information System and most notably in the last year, we have been working with the support of the Caribbean Development Bank to develop Single Window Systems for Member States which incorporates the FAL Convention requirements

I am happy to report that just this week along with our partners UNODC and supported by INL, the Region commenced activities to develop a regional maritime strategy which will compliment the work already undertaken in the Eastern Caribbean by the RSS and the OAS.

Critical to all of this is Regional Intelligence. With the assistance of the Government of the United Kingdom and following a mandate of the CARICOM Council of Ministers of National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE), there are activities focusing on strengthening CARICOM IMPACS Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre (RIFC) which would include increasing its capacity to function in the realm of Strategic Intelligence and function as an Early Warning System while simultaneously fulfilling its core operational intelligence functions. CARICOM IMPACS continues to focus on capacity building in this area through the provision of several courses in collaboration with our partners for regional stakeholders

Finally, I am pleased to announce to this forum, that for the first time in fifteen years, Interpol has established a Liaison Office within the Caribbean to serve countries within the Caribbean Basin. This office will compliment the ongoing activities of the Regional Bureau Offices in San Salvador and Buenos Aires and will serve the peculiar needs of the Caribbean States. The Headquarters Agreement between the Government of Barbados and Interpol was signed on 1 September 2021 and the entity will be collocated within CARICOM IMPACS/ Joint Regional Communication Centre. We believe that the expansion of collaborations such as these will assist the region in its counter terrorism efforts

**Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests**

Tackling terrorism requires us to work with our neighbours and partners to reinforce international cooperation against the terrorist threat. The transnational nature of terrorism means we need multilateral cooperation. Only through cooperation, and working together, we could substantially prevent and counter terrorism.

CARICOM IMPACS fully supports the call for the recognition of linkages between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism. In times of scarce resources, the idea should be to streamline and not duplicate what may have already been undertaken and implement. CARICOM IMPACS stands ready to work with the OAS/CICTE as it seeks to carry out the mandates agreed to here today under the proposed Omnibus Resolution.

Thank you.

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