



**PRESS STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Government pushes for higher standards of investigation and prosecution
for gun crimes**

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Security, Courtney Williams, says the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) is working to develop and promote higher standards for the investigation and prosecution of trafficking in firearms and related crimes.

While speaking at today's launch of a five-day training workshop, which is being organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Williams explained that the proliferation and increased access to illegal firearms accounts for the high level of armed violence and insecurity across the region.

“Jamaica and other Small Island Developing States continue to suffer from extremely high levels of homicides, with firearms being the weapon of choice for committing most of these acts of crime and violence. In 2021, firearms were used in the commission of approximately 85 per cent of the 1,463 murders committed, with a further 1,070 persons being shot and injured,” he explained.

He pointed out that despite two seizures at the island's ports recently, the average confiscation of illicit firearms suggests there is an active underground supply of illegal guns, which warrants a coordinated, comprehensive and strategic response in regulating access to small arms, and their parts, components and ammunitions.

“The current review of the Firearms Act sets out two distinct frameworks to treat with firearms that are duly registered and weapons that have been illicitly manufactured or trafficked and have never been subject to any regulatory regime”, he said.

“In addition, the Government continues to enhance the capacity in areas such as Firearms Marking and Tracing, to enhance the capacity to successfully apprehend and prosecute offences involving illicit firearms that are trafficked into the island”, the Permanent Secretary continued.

Meanwhile, Garry Conille, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Jamaica, explained that Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT) Fund Jamaica, forms part of the commitment of both the GOJ and the United Nations, to address the high levels of armed violence in a country with nearly 50 homicides per 100,000 people, and the highest homicide rate in Latin America and the Caribbean.

“The link between illicit firearms and related criminality with development is strong. The international community has recognised this link by including a specific target (Target 16.4) in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to reduce illicit arms flows as a step towards peace, justice and the rule of law. The efforts towards this goal have been

reinforced by Caribbean countries, including Jamaica, through the implementation of a regional roadmap to reduce illicit firearms in the Caribbean, which the UN is also proud to be supporting”, Conille continued.

“A solid and effective criminal justice response is cornerstone in these efforts. Without adequate investigations and prosecution of seized firearms we cannot identify the criminal networks involved in the illicit flows, and hence we bring responsible individuals to justice and proactively reduce the number of weapons from our streets”, concluded Conille.

SALIENT Jamaica, was established last month by the United Nations Development Programme and UNODA, and serves to enhance the legal and policy frameworks on firearms, strengthen criminal justice response capacities and foster a culture of no violence through education and awareness raising.

A Bill to Replace and Repeal the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Act is currently before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament. The New Bill is targeted at ensuring greater prohibition, restriction and regulation of firearms and ammunition, and for connected matters.

