Remarks by

Jean Ricot Dormeus, OAS Representative,

The Salvation Army Men’s Social Center Seventh Gala Fund Raising Dinner

October 27, 2018

Honorable Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo,

Representative of the Chairman of the Advisory Board, Mr. Duncan,

Administrator of the of the Salvation Army Men’s Social Center Major Ulrick Thibaud,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We gather here tonight as a testimony that love works miracles and never fails, because it is the mightiest of all virtues. We come to support a cause that teaches us that love begets hope, service and progress. Over several decades, the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center has rekindled the candle of hope, extended the hand of service and walked many drug addiction victims along the path of recovery and progress. So we bring our presence, our tokens and contributions to this Seventh Gala Fund Raising Dinner, and declare our appreciation for this Ministry of love.

The Ministry of the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center reminds me of a fable by Aesop, “the boy bathing”. A boy was bathing alone and got himself in great danger of being drowned after he ventured too deep in the water. A man passing scolded him for being so careless as to put himself in such a predicament and made no attempt to help. The boy cried: “Oh sir, please help first and scold me afterwards.”

“Help me first and scold me afterwards” is the cry of so many substance abusers who know they want to get sober, but cannot get there by themselves.

“Help me first and scold me afterwards” is the sound that triggered the Salvation Army rehabilitation ministry and motivated the Government of Guyana, civil society organizations and international organizations, in particular the Organization of American States, to support it.

“Help me first and scold me afterwards” resonates in our hearts as the call of the Macedonian who wants to transform his life and seeks for the light as he gropes in the middle of thick darkness. Tonight, I am glad that by saying yes to this call for mission, we encourage the victims of addiction, their family and friends to hang in, because we are working for a better tomorrow, because we are bringing our building block for the construction of a more compassionate society.

You will be astonished that because we say yes to love and service, desperate people contemplating suicide will start enjoying life again, partners inflicting abuse and violence on their spouses and children will embrace kindness and patience, and people with prejudice will sit at the universal table of brotherhood. And this, my friend, spells progress for us all.

You may wonder why the Representative of the Organization of the American States (OAS) shows so much interest in the work of the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center. My answer would be the same one Prime Minister Nagamootoo would give if you asked why the Government of Guyana supports the operations of the Center. Because it is the right thing to do, because it is a public service. In the case of the OAS, I will add that multi-dimensional security is one of the four pillars of the House of the Americas.

Through our multi-dimensional security pillar, we work on drug demand reduction, supply reduction, institutional strengthening, and we set up drug observatories for data collection in view of evidence based policies, among other things. The OAS Hemispheric Drug Strategy and Plan of Action explore means of offering treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery support services to drug dependent offenders as an alternative to imprisonment, and in some cases, criminal prosecution.

In keeping with its mission to understand and control the drug phenomenon, the OAS sponsored not long ago with the leadership of the Ministry of Public Security a School drug prevalence survey and a general population drug use survey. Last April, the OAS joined forces with CARICOM to hold in Georgetown a meeting of the Drug Observatories in the Caribbean.

Let me tell you that the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center sits at the Guyana Drug Information Network (DIN), which is the country’s drug observatory. Now you understand better why our fields of work are connected, as we are partners in strengthening security in the Americas.

Having said that, I wish to express my gratitude to Major Ulrick Thibaud and his team for inviting me to be part of this important program in support of the Rehabilitation Center. I like the vision and the commitment to mission that have been the hallmark of Major Thibaud. He wants to make a difference in the life of those caught in the vortex of adversity and hopelessness. In Jamaica, he managed the operations of the School for the Blind and for over 7 years he has brought transformative energy to the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center in Georgetown.

Major Thibaud, thank you for showing us that there is no such thing as success and happiness without loving and serving others, without spreading hope and spur progress. In the face of your dedication and example, we all say yes, we are the keepers of our brothers and sisters.

In closing, I would like to say how delighted I am to be part of such a soul lifting and love spreading event. The OAS will always stand with the member states and social partners to improve the lives of the citizens of the Americas, to help break the shackles of substance dependency or addiction, and to foster a hemisphere where peace, security and prosperity spread their refreshing shade over everyone and no one is left behind.

Thank you and God bless you!