It is good to see so many of you here this morning. Amongst you, I count quite a few old friends; the rest of you, I hope, in time, to regard as new friends.

I am honoured to have been appointed Guyana’s Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States. I am pleased to say that I am no stranger to the OAS. But I come here in a new capacity and I still have much to learn about this great, sometimes frustrating, institution. I therefore look forward to the guidance of my colleagues on the Permanent Council and the support of the General Secretariat.

My association with the OAS goes back to the summer of 1987 when I was at graduate school at Harvard and did an internship here. My joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guyana in 1990 then coincided with Guyana’s formal accession to the Organization and I was fortunate to have been appointed the Ministry’s first Desk Officer for the OAS. Those were heady days and I was privileged to attend the 1991 General Assembly in Santiago de Chile, when Resolution 1040 was adopted and the 1992 General Assembly in Nassau, when the 500th Anniversary of the Encounter of Two Worlds was celebrated.

In many respects, we are still living with the effects of the changes brought to this Hemisphere by the Accidental Tourist of 1492. Indeed, throughout the history of the Americas and, more recently, in the time when I first came to know the OAS and in the years since, there has been one constant – change. And it is how we deal with change that defines us as an Organization and a Hemisphere. These are challenging times for the Organization and the Hemisphere. But ‘twas ever thus.

Permit me, therefore, to reiterate the firm commitment of my Government of Guyana to upholding the principles established by the OAS Charter, fully cognisant of the virtuous circle we are all seeking to close, that of democracy, human rights, multidimensional security and integral development. I also give you the assurance that my Government is committed to the rule of law and the upholding of fundamental human rights, both domestically and in the
international sphere, and supportive of the principles of good governance and equitable, sustainable development.

We, moreover, believe in the value of multilateralism and cooperation with our international partners in seeking to address challenges to global governance and those that would undermine our development as a nation. And we remain wedded to the ideal of peace and the importance of peaceful dialogue in the resolution of conflict.

In the latter respect, allow me to applaud the historic Peace Agreement signed between the Government of President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia and the FARC earlier this week in Cartagena de Indias. I express my sincere hope that the people of Colombia will seize this opportunity to complete the process of reconciliation and build a lasting peace. This can only redound to the benefit of the entire region.

Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I intend to continue the good work of my friend and illustrious predecessor, Ambassador Bayney Karran, who has left me a legacy of excellent relations with the Member States of the OAS and the General Secretariat. I give you my solemn assurance that I shall work with you in a collegial manner to find consensus on matters of mutual interest, to ensure that the OAS remains the principal forum for political dialogue in the Hemisphere, to make this Organization stronger and more effective in the pursuit of our collective aims, and to help make our Hemisphere a better, safer, more prosperous place for all our peoples.

Mr. Secretary General, I now have the honour to present you with my credentials, signed by His Excellency David Granger, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Honourable Carl Greenidge, Second Vice-president and Minister of Foreign Affairs.