



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

Sovereign Order of Malta

68th Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

General Debate

Statement by:
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Permanent Observer

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Madam Chair,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation thanks the High Commissioner for providing us in his opening statement with a comprehensive overview of the complex challenges faced by his Office. We also wish to express our appreciation for the address of the President of the World Bank and the inspiring presentations made during the Special segment on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

The Sovereign Order of Malta shares UNHCR's view that the New York Declaration, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the process leading to the Global Compact on Refugees present a unique opportunity for innovation through identifying and promoting new ways and means not only to alleviate the suffering of refugees, IDPs and migrants, but above all to ensure their safety and well-being. It is in this spirit that we are participating in the ongoing thematic discussions. The first topic which focused on burden and responsibility-sharing is of particular relevance to the Order of Malta's mission.

We are present in countries of origin, at the borders through which thousands pass, and in host countries and final destinations – assisting refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants in approximately 30 countries across the globe. Refugees fleeing Syria are met at the Order of Malta's field hospital in Kilis on the Turkish border and by its mobile clinics in Lebanon. Rescue teams in the Southern Mediterranean are the first to reach refugees and migrants escaping by boat. Asylum seekers on the European mainland receive medical care, legal assistance and take part in programs to help them integrate with the local population.

The Order of Malta also continues its engagement in **humanitarian diplomacy** with a variety of partners. Through its expertise it contributes to global consultations and to the definition of possible fields of cooperation in healthcare, social assistance and emergency relief. Following the 2015 Symposium organized with OCHA here at the Palais des Nations on the topic "Religions together for humanitarian action", and its participation in the World Humanitarian Summit we are now striving to implement the commitments made at the WHS.

In March the Order hosted a third meeting with Libyan and European ambassadors and representatives of international humanitarian agencies to address the challenges of migration in **Libya** and to promote political and national reconciliation. Forms of cooperation that could have a positive influence on the humanitarian conditions of migrants and displaced people in Libya, as well as of those of the local communities, were explored. Participants were unanimous in reiterating the need to find inclusive approaches, able to involve not only the Libyan and western political forces, but also the local authorities, severely tested by the instability prevailing in the country.

At the United Nations headquarters in New York, the Order co-organized a panel entitled, "**Women Caught in the Global Refugee Crisis: Finding Hope and Opportunity in Despair**" which was held within the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. On this occasion global humanitarian leaders offered a hard look into the world of female refugees, presented their experience empowering refugee women, and shared their global relief efforts and solutions, which lead to opportunity and hope for women in countries most challenged with refugees and internally displaced people (IDP).

A further event co-organized by the Order of Malta took place during last month's session of the Human Rights Council and addressed the right to **safe drinking water and sanitation**. WASH is vital to victims of conflicts and disasters and therefore represents an essential part in many of our humanitarian projects.

Madam Chair,

The role of **local actors and communities** as first responders during emergencies is of paramount importance, as highlighted by the High Commissioner and in line with the objectives of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. In many crisis situations the Order of Malta supports health and education needs through assistance to local communities receiving refugees. By engaging civil society, including **religious and faith-based institutions**, resilience of refugees and local communities can be encouraged and issues of poverty and aid dependence addressed. However, as the current challenges in humanitarian aid are not just ones of scale, we all agree that we need to adopt new innovative approaches. One good example is cash aid and cash for work programs which are cost effective for humanitarian agencies, give recipients independence and help restore local communities. The Order of Malta's international relief agency, Malteser International, has successfully implemented this system in Iraq and Haiti, as well as in other countries.

Another innovative project is the recent medical **training mission** for future instructors of the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard, in which a medical team of the Order of Malta's Italian Relief Corps participated, together with Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency), UNHCR and IOM.

Furthermore, the Order of Malta has recently appointed two new Ambassadors tasked with **combating human trafficking** to help strengthen its commitment in preventing the trafficking of humans and protecting the victims, with projects both at local and diplomatic level.

On the ground, the Order of Malta has expanded its assistance to **South Sudanese refugees** in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **Uganda** by improving sanitary and hygiene conditions, including water supply through new solarisation technology for water wells, as well as ensuring free access to medical care. In **Tanzania** Malteser International is working to help provide both Burundian refugees and local Tanzanians with much-needed medical care. Malteser International is presently evaluating the situation in **Northern Nigeria** with a view to assisting the IDPs victims of Boko Haram terrorism. In Asia, on the **Thai/Burmese border** Malteser International continues to implement medical care projects for approximately 23,000 Karen and Burmese refugees. The aim is to strengthen the capacity and self-reliance capability of the camp community in order to prepare refugees for a potential future repatriation to their homeland. The situation in **Myanmar** is of particular concern. In Rakhine, Shan and Kayin states we provide relief after disasters and access to primary health care services. We strive to enable and empower the poorest communities in marginalized areas through a participatory and sustainable approach. The repatriation of **Afghan refugees** from Pakistan has left numerous returnees living in simple tents and hardly able to feed their families. Since March, Malteser International has been supporting some 2,800 people, which were particularly affected by the hard-wintery months. In **Northern Iraq** our principal objective is to meet the critical basic needs of conflict-affected, underserved and neglected populations in newly accessible areas. Aid to the people of war-torn **Syria** is provided through cross-border medical projects, medical aid in the Aleppo region, as well as healthcare to newly arriving IDPs from Mosul.

In concluding, Madam Chair, the Order of Malta strongly supports previous calls for political solutions to the many crisis the world is facing. The continuing absence of a political will to take action against violations of international humanitarian and human rights law has dramatic consequences, preventing us from carrying out our mission of helping our fellow human beings most in need.

Thank you