



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

**69th Session of the Executive Committee
of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

General Debate

Statement by:
H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Permanent Observer

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

My Delegation extends its sincere gratitude to the High Commissioner for his comprehensive opening statement which illustrates the dramatic humanitarian consequences of the extraordinary proliferation of crises and needs. Through its refugee response programs, the Sovereign Order of Malta is engaged in many areas of common concern. Emergency relief and operational support for sustainable solutions through long-term and future-oriented development are the pillars of its activities, some of which I would like to briefly highlight.

The Order of Malta's **Italian** Relief Corps has been at the forefront of rescue efforts in the **Mediterranean Sea** since the very start of the refugee and migration crisis. Embarked on the vessels of the Italian Coastguard, medical teams have already assisted hundreds of thousands of persons. Almost 1400 were rescued in just the first three months of this year. For over two years, the Order of Malta has also been engaged in promoting dialogue on humanitarian topics in **Libya** with local institutions and international delegations. In a series of meetings attended by representatives of the European Union, UNHCR, the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and IOM (International Organization for Migration) plans for concrete action were developed. Under the banner of the European naval mission EUNAVFORMED (the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean which is one element of a broader EU comprehensive response to the migration issue), we now provide 'Search and Rescue at sea' training courses for Libyan Coastguard personnel. The aim of the initiative — is to develop capacity building for local authorities to stop human trafficking and reduce deaths at sea.

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's **German** Association has established a wide-ranging reception and integration plan that includes courses in the German language and culture, psycho-social support, entry into employment and specific pathways for people with disabilities and victims of human trafficking. These measures aim to avoid marginalisation of asylum seekers and build resilience with their host countries. We welcome the High Commissioner's reference to the role of faith-based organizations in such circumstances. In **France**, the Order's works specialise in legal assistance for religious minorities fleeing from persecution and for immigrants kept in detention facilities. An important activity that in 2017 provided aid to 6.300 migrants and refugees. In **Ukraine** the Order of Malta is providing psychosocial help for internally displaced people in the regions of Kiev, Luhansk and Donetsk. A particular emphasis is on giving help to children and their families in order to bring them some degree of stability.

In the **Middle East**, our worldwide humanitarian relief agency, *Malteser International*, pursues its assistance in several countries affected by the ongoing crisis in **Syria**. The focus in **Lebanon** is on mobile medical units that provide services to Syrian refugees, the provision of medical supplies, drugs and equipment for primary health care centres, as well as kits and cloths for children in the camps in Northern Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley and Beirut/Mount Lebanon. In **Turkey**, a hospital on the Syrian border guarantees immediate access to healthcare for displaced

people fleeing from the atrocities and projects have been set up for combating school dropouts among refugee minors, enabling them to access primary education. Malteser International's operations in **Iraq** cover the management of medical facilities for internally displaced persons at Camp Kadia and Camp Versevi II, training of specialist personnel and the deployment of mobile medical teams with ambulances around Erbil.

With regard to **Africa** I would like to mention our engagement in **Uganda** with specific programs, primarily in the north of the country, bringing aid to refugees fleeing **South Sudan**. Malteser International is working to provide an improved supply of clean drinking water for refugees and local people alike, in the Arua district's Rhino Camp for refugees, the settlements of Oraba and Kuluba in the Koboko district, and in Bidibidi Camp in Yumbe district, while implementing hygiene measures to reduce the spread of sickness. Our regional office in Kampala also provides logistical support to projects in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, **South Sudan** and **Kenya**.

In **Asia** Malteser International is participating in the vast efforts deployed by the humanitarian community to reduce the tremendous suffering of the Rohingya refugees in **Bangladesh**. Active in Cox's Bazar's refugee camps, we are working mainly in the areas of mother and infant health, hygiene, nutrition and psychosocial support, as well as providing basic medical care and arranging for the transfer of difficult cases to nearby clinics. To prevent the spread of diseases, trainings on good health and hygiene are carried out.

The situation in **South America** with the increasing number of Venezuelans arriving in neighboring countries is a further area of concern which we share with the High Commissioner. In **Colombia** the Order of Malta is helping the authorities by providing basic medical services in cooperation with local officials for refugees in Riohacha and in neighboring villages in the department of La Guajira, as well as performing vaccinations and supplying food for undernourished children and pregnant women.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, I wish, on behalf of the Order of Malta, to thank UNHCR for having guided us through the consultations leading to the global compact on refugees. We participated actively in the process and strongly support and welcome this important achievement. In conformity with its mission to serve and care for the refugees and those in need, the Order of Malta is firmly committed to contributing to the implementation of the Compact in a spirit of solidarity and in close cooperation with its partners.

Thank you.