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## **STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**Ambassador and Permanent Observer**

**of the**

**Sovereign Military Order of Malta**

**to the**

**United Nations**

**TO THE**

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS**

**New York, March 3, 2003**

**Check against delivery**

Mr. Chairman,

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta began its participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in 1991, with its activities in Central America. Since that time, we can cite our medical assistance to the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission, as well as the Order's presence in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Great Lakes Region, the Thai-Myanmar border. We can remember the names of Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, East-Timor and Afghanistan, as milestones of the Order's cooperation with the United Nations, and as proof of its deep commitment to the defense of human rights through United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Chairman,

When the Order's Mission addressed the Special Committee in December 2001, it affirmed its support of the guiding principles of peacekeeping operations; and stated its firm belief that peacekeeping operations must be based on preventive diplomacy and preventive deployment. We all agree that it is crucial for the United Nations to be able to deploy not only peacekeeping operations, but robust and credible peacekeeping forces rapidly to any mission around the globe, and that training is an important element in developing the UN's peacekeeping capacity. Allow me to recall that rapid deployment is one of the fundamental aims included in the Brahimi Report.

Mr. Chairman,

As established in Article 24 of the Charter, the safeguard of international peace is one of the primary responsibilities of the United Nations. The mandate of the Special Committee includes measures aimed at improving the capacity of the UN to conduct peacekeeping operations, including defined mandates, objectives, and command structures.

The Order of Malta is ready to collaborate with the United Nations in accordance with its status of sovereign entity. The Order's consequent full independence permits it to participate in peacekeeping operations without regard to any political affiliation or ideology. The complexity of problems facing UN peacekeeping forces is greater than in the past. Peacekeeping forces confront difficult conditions in armed conflicts. Additional perils are the ravages of disease that can decimate peacekeepers and civilians alike. The disease factor must be carefully weighed when considering the mobilization of financial, material, and human resources.

In recent years, peacekeeping operations have undergone important changes, such as the establishment of new missions and the expansion of the mandates entrusted to the operations. Close coordination and cooperation between the UN Secretariat, member states, and all the other entities involved in peacekeeping operations have acquired a more relevant role. Peacekeeping work should be carried out under the leadership of a coordinating agency, and the participation of specialized agents is essential. The improvement of rapid deployment capabilities and the strengthening of the safety and security of personnel has been a consequence of these recent changes.

Mr. Chairman,

We continue to emphasize that protection and security of the personnel taking part in peacekeeping operations is a matter of especial concern to our Order. We are not alone in this concern. The Report of the Special Committee also supported this position on March 6, 2000. Article 67bis (not included in the final declaration) stated *The Special Committee reaffirms that safety and security constitute integral elements of the planning and conduct of peacekeeping operations*. There have been more than 1800 fatalities in peacekeeping operations since 1948. In 1999, the Canadian Permanent Representative addressed the Committee on this subject, stating, *Canada strongly urges that the Special Committee take up the issue of safety and security of UN and humanitarian personnel*. Likewise Germany, on behalf of the European Union, enjoined the Special Committee to ensure that operational concepts embrace adequate security measures. Many other voices have been heard on this issue. It is imperative that we mobilize our collective political will and start taking concrete and practical steps to protect our personnel on every level to prevent further casualties.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to conclude that the above mentioned points are some of the Order of Malta's views concerning general and technical developments. We are confident that this session will result in concrete contributions toward enhancing United Nations peacekeeping operations. Permit me to reiterate that the Sovereign Military Order of Malta continues to offer its commitment to the UN peacekeeping operations.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.