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STATEMENT

BY

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to the United Nations

TO THE

43RD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Item 3(a). Review of further implementation of the World Summit for Social
Development and the outcome of the 24th special session of the General Assembly**

New York, February 11, 2005

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first of all to express my sincere thanks, on behalf of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, for the opportunity to take part in this General Debate and to present the views of the Order on the priority theme for this Commission, on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development.

Ten years ago, world leaders came together in Copenhagen for the first ever United Nations World Summit for Social Development and to subscribe not only to the notion that human beings are at the center of development but also to the fact that this requires a multifaceted approach. The concept of social development forged in Copenhagen was one of the most inclusive and far-reaching attempts to capture the full meaning of development. The commitment of heads of state and government was a clear expression of this view when they advocated “a political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision for social development that is based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation, and full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people.”

The Order of Malta has expressed the wish to take the floor today because it is convinced that, as an “expert” in humanitarian work, and perhaps, because of its ancient and long history, as a precursor of today’s international humanitarian institutions, it can effectively bring its contribution to the solution of a number of the various core issues which comprise social development.

Mr. Chairman,

As you know, hospitaller service and eventually military defense of the poor and sick are the original aims of the Order. Its rules “to aid the poor, welcome the homeless, care for the sick and work for the peace and the good of the world” are still valid today for the members of the Order and the many volunteers acting under its flag, and they are fully consistent with the humanitarian principles and aims of the United Nations charter.

Among the many points stressed in the review of the implementation of the world summit for Social Development and the outcome of the 24th Special Session of the General Assembly, it is clear that situations of inequality have remained pervasive, causing obstacles to attacking the structural causes of poverty as well as direct negative impacts for disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors and for specific groups such as youth, older persons, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and displaced persons.

In this context, it might be useful to note that the Order of Malta has acquired a body of knowledge and expertise, not only through its Knights and Dames, but also through its 50 national Associations, its 40 relief services and several organizations and foundations, and its unique corps of several hundred thousand volunteers. The Order is therefore present in 115 countries, running hundreds of hospitals, medical centers, homes for the elderly and the disabled, nursing homes, hospices for the terminally ill and other health and rehabilitation units.

The Order has also developed international structures to coordinate its action worldwide: ECOM, the Emergency Corps of the Order of Malta and Ciomal (fighting leprosy and AIDS)

Mr. Chairman,

As well all know, a review is a time set aside in the busy agenda of the international community to sit back and try to draw a clear and fair assessment of what has been accomplished. Unfortunately, despite the many achievements, this is not a time for complacency: two examples will suffice. As we speak, in spite of the pouring of money and of good will, the impact of the terrible natural disaster in South Asia on families, displaced persons, widows, orphans, is here, for all of us, for a long time to come. And the impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa, Asia, Latin America is also here for a long time to come. Young children in Africa will probably never say “Grandpa” or “Grandma” in their lifetime because the life expectancy is now nearing 47.

It is therefore a time for action, a time for coordinated and joint action, a time for making the most of all the talents of all the members of the international community, in order to ensure the emergence of a society for all: “Every human being is entitled to participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.