

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE
SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
216 EAST 47th STREET / 8 FL
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017
PHONE: (212) 355-6213 - FAX: (212) 355-4014
e-mail: un.mission.ny@orderofmalta.org

STATEMENT

BY

Bertrand De Looz Karageorgiades, KM

Attaché

of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

to the United Nations

TO THE

44TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me, first of all, on behalf of the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Malta, to thank you for given me the floor, and to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau, for your election to the 44th session of our Commission.

I would like to congratulate also the Commission for setting up, this year, a series of Round Tables to study in depth the priority themes on our agenda, in particular the theme of poverty: I, personally, found them very lively and useful.

Mr. Chairman,

If the Order of Malta, of which I have the honor of being a knight, has asked to take the floor on one of the priority themes of our work, it is not only as “an expert in humanity” and because of its ancient history as a precursor, somehow, of the modern international humanitarian institutions, but also and perhaps above all, because the notion of poverty itself, and consequently, of its eradication, is in fact at the very heart of our Order since its foundation.

When the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem was founded in 1113 to take care of the sick of the Hospital of Saint John the Baptist then located to the south of the Church of the Saint Sepulcher, and unanimously admired at the time by all the pilgrims for the modernity of its installations and the quality of the care given to the sick, the activities of the knights were immediately and in priority channeled towards the poor, the sick, the homeless, without any distinction of races, religions or of “pilgrimages” whatever they might have been. Throughout the ages the mission of the Order has remained the same

and, in the very beginning of our new century, it still is to provide assistance to “TOUTE DETRESSE”.

“I do not ask you to tell me your race or your religion, I ask you to tell me your pain “.

This humanitarian involvement was, for centuries and because of historical events, backed up by a military involvement now obsolete. The combat of the Knights of Malta has become our common combat, our combat against the modern enemy of the international community: poverty, hunger, disease, inequality, injustice, natural disasters... This humanitarian involvement is still valid for the more than 11,000 members and 100,000 volunteers who, under the white and red flag of the Order, serve in more than 120 countries throughout the world and whose activities are faithful to the principles and objectives of the Charter

Mr. Chairman,

In 1994, the General Assembly granted the status of Observer to the Order of Malta. Since then, the Order, who celebrated its 900th anniversary in 1999, a few months before the Millennium, has, if I may say so, put some order in its own Agenda in order to align its numerous activities with the priorities of the MDGs, especially in the field of social development and humanitarian crisis where the Order has a recognized expertise.

I am rather young in the Order of Malta...but I have the privilege to have worked for many years in this House. I have listened with great interest to most of the declarations made in this room: they clearly indicate that we are all convinced of the need to eradicate poverty even though we often lack of the knowledge to do it well. We actually should be more audacious about it: the notion of extreme poverty is abject and unbearable. However, the mere fact that, after a long process that I followed with passion, its concept and that of its eradication became officially part of many UN resolutions, is almost a miracle! We celebrate it each year, on 17 October, World Day to overcome extreme

poverty....and it would not have been possible without the admirable work of Father Joseph Wresinski, the founder of ATD/Fourth World and of many of my colleagues, including Philippe de Seynes and Jacques Baudot.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, allow me to draw your attention to the following remarks by the Grand Magistry of the Order in the context of our 900th anniversary, on 24 June 1999, feast of Saint John the Baptist, and therefore on the eve of the Millennium. They still apply to all the membership of the Order of Malta:

“1000 years of history and experience to serve humanity should not prevent us to face the real challenges in front of us: the challenges of prevention which cannot be met without education. We should always bear in mind that knowledge belongs to all mankind and that to partake into the awakening of youth as well as to the promotion of equality between men and women are the values of the future”.

Thank you Mr. Chairman