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STATEMENT

BY

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to the United Nations

TO THE

THIRD COMMITTEE

[Item 63] Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child

New York, October 13, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first of all to express my sincere thanks, on behalf on the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, for the opportunity to take part in this discussion and to present the views of the Order on the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

Mr. Chairman,

The promotion and protection of the rights of children are fundamental to the Order of Malta. Through the dedication of the Order's over 80,000 volunteers we are helping to assure children the right to be born, protected, educated and nurtured. When the Order addressed this Committee in the 60th session on this topic we promised to continue to improve and expand our programs to children in Palestine, Afghanistan and elsewhere. We have—and we will continue to do so.

While this Committee has done much to bring the specific topic of violence against children to the fore, still an estimated 300 million children worldwide are subject to abuse and exploitation. We applaud the Secretary-General's appointment of independent Expert, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro to lead a global in-depth study on violence against children. We hope that its findings lead to a furthering of awareness and eventually to a substantial change.

Children are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, often unaware that they have rights. Therefore, the Order of Malta makes it a priority to increase awareness

of these rights and see that they are respected and implemented. Amongst these rights, the right to an education is fundamental. In the North of Gujarat, India, the Order provides preschool education and a daily meal to children from the so-called untouchable castes that are traditionally discriminated against and excluded from public institutions. Over 1,200 children attend Order of Malta operated schools in Gujarat alone.

Mr. Chairman,

The Report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (A/61/41) notes the particularly vulnerable situation of unaccompanied and separated children. The number of children orphaned by AIDS in Thailand is estimated to be around 300,000, and rising. Like unaccompanied children throughout the world, they are too often exposed to poverty and unacceptable standards of living, and girls are at particular risk of gender-based violence. Since June 2002, the Order has been operating a large-scale basic healthcare project in Thailand's remote mountain villages to both address the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic and to provide healthcare service to these defenseless children. In collaboration with local organizations, the Order also provides many of these children in Mae Sariang, Thailand with an allowance for milk, food, school-uniforms and books.

Mr. Chairman,

The Order strongly supports the actions taken to alleviate the suffering of thousands of children affected by armed conflicts, both as victims of the brutality and as perpetrators against their own community. Sadly, the Report of the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/61/275) estimates that over two million children have been killed in armed conflicts and six million have been rendered permanently disabled. While the signing of the Convention on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict by 122 nations is encouraging, this is not enough to address the problem. The Order wishes to express its hope for successful peace negotiations between the Ugandan Government and the Lord's Resistance Army, the latter of whom has abducted large numbers of children and trained them as guerilla fighters.

The Order is encouraged to see that since May 2002, 177 nations committed themselves to follow up on the goals laid out in "A world fit for children". It is vital that countries continue to work towards incorporating these objectives into their national development plans.

Thank you Mr. Chairman