

STATEMENT

BY

Mr. Bertrand De Looz Karageorgiades, KM

Counselor

of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta

to the United Nations

TO THE

SECOND COMMITTEE

[Item 57] Eradication of Poverty and other Development Issues

New York, November 10, 2006

Translation by Ms. Armandine Bonnard

Madame President,

Allow me first in the name of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta to congratulate you, as well as the other Committee members, for your election to the presidency of our Committee.

Madame President,

Almost one month ago we celebrated, in this Committee and across the world, the international day for the elimination of poverty. Due to bad weather conditions, the ceremony, which usually takes place in the garden of the United Nations, took place here, in our conference room. To me, this seemed the right thing to do, since, indeed, it was among our Committee – fifteen years ago, in this exact same room – it was recognized that the elimination of poverty was more a question of obligation than charity or assistance, and must be developed and included in the text of the United Nations.

It was also under our guidance that, this morning, the international day of human solidarity was launched, in order to generate awareness of the importance of solidarity in the goal in eliminating poverty. It is not by chance that poverty is the negation of development, combating hunger, ameliorating health services, and insuring decent housing. The elimination of poverty can only be achieved by global sodality.

Madame President,

Combating poverty, through solidarity, has been at the heart of the Order's activities for over 900 years. Since the creation of the Order's hospital of Saint-Jean of Jerusalem, the activities of the knights, then known under the name of Hospitaller Brothers, were immediately and firstly directed towards the poor, the sick, and the homeless, regardless of their race, religion, or nationality. The mission of the Order, still to this day, is to help all people in despair.

Indeed, loyal to its vocation, the Order is always at the services of the poor, the sick, and the deprived: today it is active in the medical, social and humanitarian field in over 120 countries. Its actions are reinforced by the diplomatic relations it currently shares with 96 States. The Order operates hospitals, medical centers, day care hospitals, retirement homes, facilities for handicapped people, and places for people with terminal illnesses. The Order's volunteers insure primary care, social services, emergency relief, and humanitarian aid to many countries. They constitute the heart of the assistance services and ambulance service that, since the creation of an ambulance service in Ireland in 1938, became one of the principle activities of the Order.

For over 40 years, the Order also focuses a large part on efforts towards the treatment of leprosy, a disease that unfortunately still affects many regions of the world.

The Order's financial, logistic, and scientific support to the Institute of Leprosy in Dakar, Senegal, has advanced the progress in treating the disease.

The Order's dynamism is due to the support of its 12,000 members, its 80,000 well trained permanent volunteers and its, 11,000 employees, who are mostly medical staff. In addition, the large network of 42 national organizations of the Order, foster the extraordinary diversity and variety of the interventions and activities of the Order in each country and region in the world. It is important to underline that the Order of Malta works closely in collaboration with Member States, specialized institutions, and local and international NGO's.

Madame President,

Throughout this Committee's debates, the accent has been rightly put, on the necessity of concrete and precise actions. Allow me then to briefly cite some of the most recent examples of pilot projects executed by the Order which guarantee emergency aid across the world, including medical emergency assistance, long-term reconstruction programs and development projects.

In Western Afghanistan, 20,000 children, among which 40 percent are girls, now have access to a better education, thanks to the schools built by the Order.

In India, a pilot project on micro-credit was launched in neighborhoods and villages affected by the tsunami in December 2004, which gave many women the opportunity to start small businesses.

In Northwest Cambodia, a pilot-project executed in collaboration with the Cambodian Confederation for Health and Human Rights, helped people develop an effective community based health insurance system.

In Kenya, the Order has considerably expanded its activity regarding tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, particularly in the slums of Nairobi, financing eight sanitary centers with laboratories facilitating the consultation and treatment of the sick.

Madame President,

It is suitable to recall that the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, almost a millenarian, could not have been so accomplished without its neutral and apolitical characteristics and its recognition by a large number of Member States. These traits allow the Order to carry out humanitarian missions where other organizations hardly have access. In this area, the work of the Order is facilitated by the presence of its diplomatic relations in the concerned States.

The Order of Malta is deeply committed to its mission: relief for the poor, the sick, and the despaired of all nature. Yes, even after 900 years of history, our mission,

starting at the Jerusalem hospital, remains the same; to alleviate the suffering of humanity and thereby to contribute to the well being of people. But the Order of Malta is also an Order that lives in its time: it is convinced that with its humanitarian principles, neutrality, impartiality, and its independence, it has an important role to play in the humanitarian field and in development. For this purpose, aware of its Observer status that the organization of the United Nations granted 12 years ago, the Order is attentive to UN initiatives. It is always ready to improve its own activities for progress, for, according to the words of the Pope Paul VI, “the development of the people”.

I thank you Madame President