

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta**

**to the United Nations**

**TO THE**

**61ST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY ON**

**Item 69 a, and d: Strengthening the Coordination of Humanitarian and Disaster**

**Relief Assistance of the United Nations, including Special Economic Assistance.**

**New York, November 13, 2006**

## **Check against delivery**

Madame President,

Allow me first of all to express my sincere thanks, on behalf on the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta, for the opportunity to take the floor and present the views of the Order on the Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance of the United Nations.

Madame President,

The past year was marked by an 18 percent rise in the number of large scale-disasters, affecting 157 million people. The overall trends suggest that tragedies are becoming more frequent, therefore the Order is very pleased to see that the Central Emergency Respond Fund has made great progress towards its objective to improve field level coordination and further strengthen humanitarian response in under-funded crises.

The Order of Malta fully recognizes the need for coordination in the field and the pre-eminent role that mechanisms like the CERF and UN agencies can play in this respect. However, the Order believes that the management and funding should not be overly centralized.

Madame President,

The Order of Malta works actively in partnership with UN agencies, states and local and international NGOs to further strengthen a synchronized response to all humanitarian challenges.

One example is Sudan where the Order has been active since 1998 and has assisted over 630,000 Sudanese people in basic health care. In Darfur, the Order ensures health care for over 115,000 people and, with the collaboration of UNICEF and WHO, has vaccinated more than 16,000 children against polio. The Order offers medical assistance to pregnant women, treats children and combats cholera and malaria. The Order is committed to provide aid to the most isolated and vulnerable communities. In the region of Wadah, Northern Sudan, where it had been more than three years since medical services were available, the Order is now providing medical supplies to more than 30,000 people—again in collaboration with UNICEF and WHO. On average, around 6,000 patients in this country alone are treated each month in the numerous hospitals of the Order. Along with the Order's work in Northern Sudan, the Order of Malta continues to develop its long-term health care services in Southern Sudan, where the focus is on combating tuberculosis, leprosy and sleeping sickness. The Order has more than 80,000 dedicated volunteers who work in 120 countries to provide emergency relief to victims of natural disasters and to those affected by war and lethal epidemics.

Madame President,

In the case of an emergency situation, it is imperative for humanitarian assistance to provide not only *immediate* relief to victims, but to develop long-term support systems. The Order is convinced of this, and has demonstrated its ability to broaden its role from immediate relief to long-term development in many areas. In northern Pakistan, the Order had personnel on the ground in the first days following the devastating earthquake last year. They collaborated with other organizations and the local community to provide medical care, water and vital goods for survivors. Once the emergency needs were met, the Order shifted its activities towards sustainable rehabilitation. The Order aided 25,000 persons by reconstructing earthquake-safe housing, introducing income generating measures and establishing primary health care facilities. The Order of Malta bought goods locally to limit transportation costs and strengthen the local economy, thus providing a boost towards self reliance. Projects with timetables stretching from three to five years in the future are planned and executed in close consultation with national authorities, ensuring the Order's lasting and meaningful presence in an area.

Madame President,

The Order always strives to accomplish two goals in the execution of its humanitarian work. First, it seeks to place local NGOs at the center of the relief effort and the training of local staff at the core of many of its projects. Secondly, the Order strongly believes that a long-term commitment is necessary to achieve a lasting impact on the community.

This is exemplified in our support to the Democratic Republic of Congo where the Order has been active for more than ten years. The Order closely collaborates with 300 locally run health care facilities there, providing them with medicine and medical equipment. As a result, more than 900, 000 persons in the province of Kivu and nearly 2 million persons in Ituri have access to primary health care.

Madame President,

The UN has taken significant measures to improve the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers, but they continue to be victims of physical attacks, threats, and robberies. They are often the first to respond to crises in the most unsafe regions, and the last ones to remain: long after financial resources ebb. The Order stands with the Secretary-General in his appeal to Member States to fulfill their obligation, under the Charter of the United Nations, to ensure the safety of all humanitarian aid workers. It is only with the full commitment and cooperation of all Member States that meaningful steps to enhance security for humanitarian workers can be achieved.

Madame President,

In reference to the item 2d, the assistance to the Palestinian people, may I say that the Order remains dedicated to the development of a sustainable health system for the Palestinian people. The Order of Malta has operated the Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem-Palestine for 16 years, where more than 36,000 healthy children have been

delivered. These works are carried out despite having been besieged and damaged as a consequence of the violence in the area.

Madame President,

The Order of Malta's humanitarian principles, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, provide the credentials to continue the delivery, to improve its effectiveness in the provision of humanitarian relief and development. Allow me to assure you that the Order is responding daily to the challenges that humanitarian work presents and we will continue to closely follow the leadership and initiatives of the United Nations and its agencies.

Thank You