



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: orderofmalta@un.int

STATEMENT

BY

Mrs. Fiamma Arditì Manzo

Counsellor

of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

to the United Nations

TO THE

THIRD COMMITTEE

[Item 66] Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child

New York, October 19, 2007

Check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and Malta is addressing the Third Committee this session, allow me to first of all congratulate you, as well as the other Committee members, for your election to head our Committee. The Order of Malta, is honored for its first statement to this committee to be made on promotion and protection of the rights of children—an issue where the work of the third committee is so vital.

Mr. Chairman,

The promotion and protection of the rights of children is 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 protected, educated and nurtured.

Of the fundamental rights of children, the most basic must be the right to be born in a safe environment. The Order of Malta's Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem provides the population of Bethlehem and its surrounding area with a place for women to give birth under safe and modern medical conditions and receive high-quality maternity care. The hospital delivers 60% of all babies in the district, and with 25% of the mothers and infants

living in refugee camps, it is important that this center exist to protect the rights and ensure the health of the newborns.

The health of newborns must also be protected from the preventable transmission of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS is one of the four major areas of focus in “A world fit for children,” [resolution S-27/2, annex] and sadly progress towards the goals on HIV and children is “mixed.” The Order is seeing great success and is increasing the reach of its programs for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission in Argentina, Mexico, South Africa, and Cambodia, to name only a few. With estimates suggesting that nearly \$30 billion will be needed by the end of the decade to provide a dramatically scaled-up response to the needs of children infected or affected by HIV, the Order of Malta encourages member states and organizations to act swiftly on the recommendations of the Secretary General in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

The rights of girl children are uniquely vulnerable to horrific abuses that put the physical and mental health of the girl in jeopardy. The Report’s (A/62/297) emphasis on obstetric fistula is important, as it is necessary that the UN draw the attention of the public, policymakers and the media to the condition, which is entirely preventable through skilled delivery care and timely access to emergency obstetric care. Earlier this year, the Order of Malta supported the UNFPA’s Campaign to End Fistula in Darfur—identifying and arranging surgery for patients and distributing pamphlets of the simplified educational messages developed by the UNFPA. The Order hopes to see an even greater support for UNFPA’s Campaign in the future.

The Report also finds persisting gender disparities in education, not only in the fundamental area of enrollment, but also in gender biased curriculum and school management. It is essential to provide girls with the tools of a good education if there is any hope of ensuring for them a better life. Recognizing this as a root cause of the disparate situation of girls, the Italian Association of the Order of Malta is opening a secondary school for girls in Rumbek, Sudan. The project does not only encompass the construction of the buildings, but also supports a long-term educational system, which will enroll at least 100 girls each year. The Rumbek school will be outfitted with modern IT infrastructure, necessary for a quality education for the women and girls of Sudan.

Mr. Chairman,

The varieties of crimes against children in situations of armed conflict are numerous: all offenses against life itself; all violations of the integrity of the human person; all offenses against human dignity; and the denial to basic human services. To help address the acute vulnerability of children in armed conflict the Order has sought to provide not only immediate practical support such as food, shelter and clothing, but also to help heal the psychological wounds of those affected and to support them as they rebuild their lives.

In Lebanon, for example, the Order launched a \$1 million dollar appeal to provide vitally needed hygiene products, medicines, food, clothing, bedding and milk for 7,000 displaced children under the age of eight, including 700 babies born during the conflict. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where civil war has already claimed more than four

million lives, rape has unfortunately become a weapon used by the many factions involved. The Order provides these young victims with the psychological care they require to heal, and for the longer-term, provides supplies to enable them to start their own small business. But it is time for the international community to stop and prevent these violations of young life.

Mr. Chairman,

The protection of the rights of children with physical and mental disabilities is also of special importance to the Order. The Order's work with the disabled in Hungary, Poland, France, Austria, Switzerland, and the United States is well known, and its support of the disabled in developing countries, which lack institutions especially for the disabled, is most important. In Ecuador, the French Association of the Order of Malta operates centers to improve the lives of these individuals from an early age. For more than 20 years, the Center of St. John of Jerusalem in Quito has provided quality education and resources for social integration for disabled children. Since 1984, the School of St. John of Jerusalem in Cuenca, which works with physically disabled children of all ages, provides education and therapy services to improve the lives of hundreds of children a year. The Order of Malta will continue this work, and holds it as a priority to defend the rights of the defenseless.

Thank you Mr. Chairman