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STATEMENT

BY

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to the United Nations

TO THE

62nd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON

Item 71: Strengthening the Coordination of Humanitarian and Disaster Relief

Assistance of the United Nations, including Special Economic Assistance.

New York, November 19, 2007

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Mr. President,

Allow me 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.

Mr. President,

The past year, large-scale natural disasters alone affected 143 million people and resulted in more than 23,000 deaths. Of course, natural disasters are not the only tragedies which require an emergency humanitarian response. The Order is pleased that the Central Emergency Respond Fund continues to make progress towards its objective to improve field level coordination, and further strengthen the humanitarian response of the UN in often 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.

Mr. President,

The Order of Malta, with its more than 80,000 dedicated volunteers working in

120 countries, works actively in partnership with UN agencies, states and local and international NGOs to further strengthen a synchronized response to humanitarian challenges.

For example, in Burkina Faso serious flooding at the beginning of September killed and injured dozens of people and displaced 28,000, and washed away vast agricultural lands. At the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Order in Burkina Faso provided community tents, camp beds and blankets. Also, emergency and ambulance corps, set up by the Order's French Association helped to transport victims to the nearest hospital structures.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo the Order of Malta, in collaboration with the UN World Food Program (WFP), launched a comprehensive food distribution program that provides approximately 5,000 internally displaced families from the community of Nindja in Bakavu in the Kiva Province with 368 tons of food. Safety for the Order's personnel during the distributions was ensured by local administration and military authorities.

Mr. 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 areas affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster are one case in which this transition is vital, and it is here that the Order has demonstrated its ability to broaden its

role from immediate relief to long-term development. Immediately following the tsunami, the Order of Malta, in close cooperation with local partner organizations, was in South India providing emergency relief in the form of clothing, shelter, food, and medical aid for flood victims and, in parallel, assessing projects for the reconstruction phase. As the Secretary-General's Report (A/62/83-E/2007/67) mentions, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Indian States affected by the tsunami is one of the highest in the Country. In the Tamil Nadu region, the Order employed its experience with the virus to start a comprehensive prevention project in 33 villages and then expanded its commitment to fighting the infection. In addition to learning how to prevent and control further transmission of the disease, people learn how to live with the disease and affected family members receive training on extended home based care and support. Projects with timetables stretching far into the future are planned and executed in close consultation with national authorities, ensuring the Order's lasting and meaningful presence in an area.

Mr. 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 Palestinian people. The Order of Malta for 17 years, has operated the Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem-Palestine where more than 36,000 healthy children have been delivered. These works are often carried out under difficult and dangerous conditions.

Mr. President,

The report of the Secretary-General on the issue (A/62/324) states that the safety of humanitarian and UN personnel remains precarious. Significant measures have been taken 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 current numbers are more than just statistics to the Order of Malta, which last year lost 29 year-old Dr. Ezmeray Azizi, who was killed in an ambush in North-West Afghanistan, along with a UNICEF colleague. 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.

Mr. 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