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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. Mr. Robert L. Shafer**

**Ambassador**

**of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta**

**to the United Nations**

**THEMATIC DEBATE ENTITLED**

**“ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE:**

**THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE WORLD AT WORK”**

**New York, February 12, 2008**

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored, on behalf of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, to have the opportunity to participate in this thematic debate entitled “Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World at Work.”

The Order of Malta recognizes the link between environmental health and social well-being, as well as the implicit responsibility of the current generation, the UN community included, to secure the health of the planet for future generations. Pope John Paul II linked protecting the environment to “authentic human ecology,” which promotes both human dignity and respect for creation. We are not merely consumers of a once seemingly boundless supply of natural resources, but stewards of an environment, which not only is limited in the fruits which it shares, but sensitive as well to the way mankind uses those gifts.

Mr. President,

As noted by the President of the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, during the informal thematic debate in July and August, 2007, climate change is an issue of economic development as much as one of global justice and equality. Inaction on climate change would have serious social and economic

implications and would magnify the existing inequalities between developed and developing countries. Projected climate change will exacerbate the occurrence of infectious diseases such as malaria and dengue fever and further strain the natural resources necessary for survival. Widespread prevalence of infectious diseases leads to increasing levels of poverty. Poverty in turn is strongly associated with infectious diseases not typically associated with climate change, such as HIV/AIDS, and in many situations leads to civil unrest.

Members and volunteers of the Order—living in the service of others, of the poor and the sick, regardless of their race, origin or religion—bear daily witness to this painful cycle, and understand that all three situations must be addressed. The United Nations must strengthen public-health planning capacities, including improved monitoring and evaluation of climate and health impacts as well as strengthening health systems to enable them to provide protection from climate-related health risks and adopt a more forward-looking preventative approach to health protection.

Mr. President,

The most important cause of the current climate change crisis is human activity and its required energy, which is at the heart of this climate mitigation agenda. We have allowed it to become an extraordinary crisis; therefore it demands an extraordinary response from all of us individually and collectively. True stewardship requires a keen awareness of the environment, and challenges us to use our intelligence, ambition, and ability to adapt and innovate to discover the earth's productive potential in an environmentally sustainable way while satisfying our needs. The United Nations must

facilitate and motivate this reform of human activity by drawing on its strengths: providing a neutral forum for brokering negotiations; establishing trust and galvanizing high-level political support; and securing participation, engagement and ownership of a broad constituency of members.

To conclude, Mr. President, sensitivity to the fragility of the only place that humans can call home, must be cultivated and nurtured through renewed education in solidarity. Such teachings exalt the principles of respect for one another, for the recognition of that which is great within all of us, even if unseen, for understanding, and patience. With these beliefs, the prospect of delving into a difficult task such as stemming the tide of environmental destruction through climate change will be seen as necessary and right to preserve a viable home planet for future generations.

Thank you.