



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](mailto:orderofmalta@un.int)  
[www.un.int/orderofmalta](http://www.un.int/orderofmalta)

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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

**Ambassador and Permanent Observer**

**of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta  
to the United Nations**

**TO THE**

**THEMATIC DEBATE**

**OF THE 62nd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**ON**

**Recognizing the Achievements, Addressing the Challenges and Getting Back on  
Track to Achieve the MDGs by 2015**

**New York, 3 April, 2008**

**Check against delivery**

Mr. President,

Esteemed Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere thanks on behalf of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta for this opportunity to speak on the crucial topic of recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and maintaining a steady course to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Mr. President:

First, my highest congratulations for your wise guidance in organizing this important thematic debate and choosing the MDGs as an area of focus for the 62nd Session of this Assembly. It is only with the leadership of your caliber that the United Nations, our most indispensable international institution, can come back from the current crisis in resources and personnel to emerge even more effective and respected worldwide. From the onset, the Order has pledged to continue expanding our cooperation with the United Nations in the field of humanitarian assistance and sustainable development, and we reiterate this pledge today.

The Order of Malta considers the Millennium Development Goals as an example of the "preferential option for the poor" teachings of the two most recent Popes.

Combating poverty, along with diseases and sufferings, which are other MDGs, has been at the heart of the Order's activities for more than 900 years. Since its founding in the eleventh century, the Order of Malta has historically directed its efforts towards the poor, the sick and homeless, regardless of race, religion or nationality. The Order's 12,500 members, 80,000 permanent volunteers and professional medical staff, and 13,000 doctors, nurses and stretcher-bearers make up an exceptional network permanently present in 120 countries, providing hospitals, hospices, and medical services. These activities are carried out with great expertise, often by the Order's world-wide relief service, Malteser International.

With respect to the first MDG, to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger," the Order is saddened by the unfortunate fact that the absolute number of poor is rising in sub-Saharan Africa and is projected to be around 360 million by 2015, this is despite an overall per capita GDP growth in developing countries worldwide. This is the greatest challenge to the realization of our goals on poverty.

Background papers for this meeting highlight the improvement of slums as a unique grassroots opportunity for reaching the MDGs. Towards this goal, the Order of Malta has considerably expanded its activities in these most disadvantaged areas. For example, in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, the Order finances numerous health centers and operates far reaching programs for treatment of tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

The fight against hunger is an even more challenging part of the MDGs. Inflated food prices, unfair trade regulations and climate change are among the obstacles. The

Order of Malta demonstrates its substantial commitment to eliminating hunger in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. There we oversee nutrition centers for undernourished and malnourished children. At the same time, we distribute seeds and small livestock to their parents and teach them about planting and nutrition. The Order is grateful to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Program (WFP) for partially funding these initiatives and working as partners towards meeting goals on hunger with a focus on sustainability.

Successful progress towards the first MDG is key to more rapid progress towards all eight Goals.

The Order of Malta works towards the goal on education by increasing the availability of education in developing countries, particularly for girls. For example, the Order has established kindergartens in Sao Paulo and Brasilia, Brazil, while giving job training and employment to unmarried mothers. We have a medical center in Milot, Haiti, which educates 600 children in addition to meeting medical needs of women and children. The Order administers schools in western Afghanistan for 20,000 children, 40% of whom are girls.

The MDGs regarding health are of particular importance to the Order of Malta. The Order has been working towards the MDGs in health in Cambodia after its 30 year civil war. We have carried out a comprehensive community-based maternal child health project there. Infant health, maternal health and HIV/AIDS converge in the issue of

mother to child transmission of the virus. In Mexico, the Order of Malta's program brings infected women into prenatal care and because of this, all have given birth to healthy children. There, as in the many countries with Order of Malta programs, we align ourselves with efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals. On five continents the Order of Malta operates clinics and hospitals for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis: all diseases that disproportionately affect the world's poorest people. The MDGs on health, numbers four, five and six, are interconnected. Failure on any one is likely to slow progress on another.

Mr. President,

We are grateful to speak on such an important theme and we are honored to partner with Member States and the dedicated professionals of the United Nations on our common goals. We are convinced more than ever of the importance of the MDGs, which cover the spectrum of human rights and social justice issues that are at the core of the Order of Malta's *raison d'etre*. With the continued leadership and support of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, these goals become more real everyday. We are emboldened by the commitment and admirable leadership of the General Assembly. It is now up to us in the international community to complete the realization of these goals by 2015.

Thank you very much.