



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
www.un.int/orderofmalta

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. Mr. Robert L. Shafer

Ambassador

Permanent Observer

of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

to the United Nations

TO THE

High-level meeting of the General Assembly

on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of

Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

New York, June 12, 2008

Mr. President,

Thank you for allowing me to take the floor. Thank you also for your wise guidance as we review our progress on HIV/AIDS at this important midway point to the Millennium Development Goals.

Two years ago, my delegation joined many of you in this building to issue support for the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. In this document, we recognized that in many parts of the world, the spread of HIV/AIDS is a cause and consequence of poverty, and that effectively combating HIV/AIDS is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We also acknowledged that for the first time in history we have the means to reverse the global pandemic and to avert millions of needless deaths. To be effective, we must deliver an intensified, much more urgent and comprehensive response, and the Sovereign Order of Malta stands as a partner in the worldwide efforts to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and to improve the lives of those already infected.

Mr. President,

The percentage of HIV-infected pregnant women receiving antiretrovirals to prevent mother-to-child transmission increased from 14 percent in 2005 to 34 percent in 2007. While this increase in two years is encouraging, sadly children still account for one in six new HIV infections. The Order of Malta seeks to end the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child by providing access to screening, pre-natal therapies,

and medicinal treatments.

For those already suffering, the Order of Malta has established programs of medical and palliative care. These programs are operational in countries in Central and South America, Africa, and Asia.

Mr. President,

As the Secretary General's Report suggests, the HIV epidemic requires a sustained, long-term response in order to be overcome. The Order of Malta strives to administer its humanitarian aid in a fashion that ensures sustainability and also diminishes the causes of need in the first place. A major component of the work of the Order of Malta is not just addressing acute crises as they occur, but helping to create the structures and mechanisms that sustainably blend into the communities. In addition to HIV prevention and treatment, we endeavor to strengthening health systems at large. In accordance with the Political Declaration, the Order of Malta believes that the HIV/AIDS response must be part of a comprehensive strategy that addresses basic healthcare needs. By offering regular healthcare, we know that many illnesses can be prevented entirely. The healthcare paradigm can shift from treating acute problems to prevention. Through the establishment of healthcare centers and the provision of vaccines, the Order of Malta is working to this end.

Acute shortages of health-care professionals impede this goal, and we should aim to build the capacity of community-based groups to help members of vulnerable

populations get access to essential health and support services. The training of an increased number of healthcare workers in the community is an essential element to a sustainable approach. The Order of Malta seeks to alleviate the strain placed upon the few overburdened workers available and to actively engage the population in their own health. The training of local community members in vital healthcare tasks is always a priority in even the most remote medical centers of the Order of Malta.

Mr. President,

The Order of Malta commends the Secretary-General for bringing particular attention to the problem of joint tuberculosis and HIV infection. These two epidemics must be addressed together. The Order of Malta has been working for decades to fight the spread of TB and will continue to expand these projects.

Mr. President,

At this Midway point to the MDGs, the Order of Malta recognizes the importance of evaluating the progress made thus far in the HIV/AIDS fight. We are proud to work in harmony with the Members States of the United Nations to achieve the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it. It will only be through international cooperation and coordination that this scourge can be eliminated.

Thank you, Mr. President and Members of the General Assembly.