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STATEMENT

BY

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to the United Nations

TO THE

THIRD COMMITTEE

[Item 63] Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child

New York, October 17, 2008

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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 to make its first statement to this committee on the promotion and protection of the rights of children—an issue where the work of the third committee is so vital.

The promotion and protection of the rights of children is fundamental to the mission of the Order of Malta. Through the dedication of the Order's over 80,000 volunteers and 15,000 employees working in 120 countries, we are helping to assure children the right to be protected, educated and nurtured.

Mr. Chairman,

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 regardless of race, religion, culture or social condition. Since 1990 more than 42,000 babies

have been born in the hospital. 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,” and sadly progress towards the goals on HIV and children is “at a pace slower than desired.” 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, Angola, South Africa, and Cambodia, and elsewhere. With estimates suggesting that Governments and donors have allocated only one-third of the funding 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.

In the Secretary-General’s follow-up to the special session on children, it is reported that due to poor progress in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, it is unlikely that the global target on reducing child hunger will be met. Adequate nutrition is elemental to the goal of promoting healthy lives outlined in the outcome document. The Order is dedicated to this goal, and operates comprehensive nutrition programs in these particularly strained areas and beyond. For example, during a micronutrient campaign earlier this year in Darfur, vitamins, minerals and medicines were distributed and the Order reached tens of thousands of children, pregnant women, and new mothers. We can not let the specter of

failure on our goals keep us from the activities that are so important to the individual being aided.

Mr. Chairman,

The report of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict reminds us of the numerous terrible crimes against children in situations of armed conflict: 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 the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, 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. The Order strives do its part in battling the injustices to young life that armed conflict creates.

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