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Statement by Mrs. Fiamma Arditì Manzo Counsellor

(Check Against Delivery)

Madam Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this esteemed gathering of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The Order wishes to recognize The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's ability to empower women in all spheres of public and private life. The Order stands united with the 189 nations who emphasized the importance of the goals of this international campaign. The Declaration has yielded many great achievements on behalf of women, but more work remains. Today, the Order would like to use this forum to address its work on **the promotion of women's rights; the prevention and treatment of violence against women; and the amelioration of the affect of HIV/AIDS on the female population.**

Madam Chair,

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided a much needed stage for the furtherance of women's rights. The Order, along with its worldwide relief organization for humanitarian aid, Malteser International, is determined to promote women's rights and further eliminate discrimination against women. For example, in 2012, on International Women's Day, Malteser International honored the Dalit women of Rajasthan. Working together with Unnati, a relief service in north-eastern **India**, Malteser maintains a project that enables women to develop their leadership skills and demand their rights. This project assists women from India to petition their government and assert claims by educating them and giving them the appropriate tools they need in order to access necessary social services.

Madam Chair,

With regard to violence against women and girl children, paragraph 125 section A of the Declaration states that governments, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions should provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence. The Order of Malta has provided clinics all over the world for this purpose.

For example, in **DR Congo** where sexual violence accompanies conflict, and rape is often used as an instrument of war, the Order has health centers that provide medical care tailored to these horrific acts against women. The Order's health centers in DR Congo provide both medical and psychological treatment. Dialogue with psychologists is crucial to the recovery process and for treatment of trauma. Malteser International runs 64

clinics in South- Kivu province alone, making treatment available to approximately 49,000 women who have been subjected to assault, rape, and other atrocities.

Madam Chair,

Paragraph 98 of the Beijing Declaration stresses the horrible effects that HIV/AIDS has on the health of young women and girls. Women and girl children are disproportionately affected by the disease – women are often incapable of advocating for their protection against the disease; female children are often burdened with the task of caring for sick parents or for their younger siblings when their parents are lost to HIV/AIDS; and women carrying the disease often find themselves caring for sick infants when they are unable to prevent transmission during pregnancy and childbirth.

In **Myanmar**, Malteser runs a program that allows HIV/AIDS infected persons to live an independent life. The project provides a home for 200 people in a compound in Nam Naw Par Kote village, a small settlement in Kengtung Township, creating a support system that lessens the burden of female children with sick parents or siblings to care for.

The Order has been operating for more than six years in **Namibia**, where high incidence of HIV/AIDS limits average life expectancy to less than 40 years. In the Kavango region, an estimated 24,000 children are orphaned by the disease. The Order's coordinated assistance and development project is helping HIV-positive widows and young female orphans to find work through a tailoring project. The Order also operates hostels and meal programs in the region for orphaned youth.

Additionally, the Order also runs countless retroviral dispensary clinics and HIV/AIDS testing facilities in over 60 countries, predominantly located on the African continent, but also in Latin America and Asia. Through these medical relief projects, the Order of Malta works to mitigate the consequences of HIV/AIDS on severely affected communities and their female populations.

Madam Chair,

Allow me to conclude by affirming the Order of Malta's support for the Beijing Declaration. I thank you for this opportunity to share some of the Order's projects related to its initiatives with the international community.

The Order will continue its efforts to make the world a better and safer place for women and girl children and acknowledges that where these goals are achieved, families and communities are infinitely healthier than those in which women are oppressed and abused.

Thank you.