



SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

216 EAST 47TH STREET, 8TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL. +1.212.355.6213 – FAX +1.212.355.4014

E-MAIL: ORDEROFMALTA@UN.INT www.UN.INT/ORDEROFMALTA

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Statement by Mrs. Fiamma Arditì Manzo Counsellor

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr. Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor and allowing the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to contribute to this discussion. We are confident that the continued commitment of the United Nations community, much of which is represented here today, will be a relevant factor in the good work of this interactive dialogue. We welcome this opportunity to discuss the challenges and achievements in implementing the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

As a sovereign entity, remaining independent and neutral, we are able to serve the needs of many who are in the frailest of the human condition. The Order has worked to relieve suffering regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, or religious beliefs for over 900 years. The Order of Malta, in conjunction with its worldwide relief arm Malteser International, is committed to improving the status of women worldwide. Its humanitarian projects, implemented through the cooperation of local, national, and international partner associations, work to advance the achievement of the Millennium Goals and to improve the lives of women and girl children everywhere.

Mr. Chair,

Empowered women fuel thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. They are the backbone of families often caring for children and the elderly. In many instances they are the sole providers for their families. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender-driven wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination.

The Order believes we can do more to accelerate progress in women's empowerment. The movement for gender equality must begin at the grassroots level. For instance, in the small village of No Pa Poo in Thailand, Malteser International works to empower women by including them in brainstorming ways to improve their community. Many women from the village joined the water sanitation committee, which was instituted by Malteser International and is known by its acronym WASH. Through the committee, these women identified two main projects urgently needed: the protection of their water source and the construction of latrines. Thanks to the efforts of these women and the help of Malteser International, the villagers have clean water inside their homes and latrines set up for each family. Additionally, providing the women with hygiene-training (including the practices of hand-washing, water-boiling and covering food) has prevented diseases that constantly plagued the villagers such as diarrhea.

This project and others like it in other parts of the world help to empower women in alignment with the Third MDG by elevating their voice in their communities. Such projects also work towards the attainment of the Sixth MDG through the prevention of disease. Providing hygiene-training to the women ensures that the knowledge will remain for generations as the women share their knowledge with their children and other members of the community.

Mr. Chair,

Another project of the Order's Malteser International also works to empower women and augment their health. In South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malteser International administers a health program in cooperation with 16 local partner organizations and women's groups. Through this health program, local psychological health centers offer PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis) treatment to women who have become victims of sexual violence. This treatment reduces the risk of HIV infection. Malteser International also puts women at the forefront in helping other women on issues that men are unable to address through the formation of women's groups. Women are trained to help other women overcome the trauma and work through the stigma of sexual assault – thereby empowering women to empower each other.

These are just a few of the projects that the Order of Malta has set into action. The Order of Malta understands that every community is different and requires different attention. There is no 'one size fits all' solution. Projects must begin at the grass-root level and must engage local people, empowering them to help themselves. At the core of these communities are the strong, intelligent, resilient women who, with just a little help, can be the force to carry our generation to the next level in achieving the Post 2015 Agenda goals.

Allow me to conclude by stating that the Order of Malta is committed to working with non-profit organizations, UN aid agencies, local and national governments, so that this generation of women has equal access to safety, security and achievement – a goal that has not yet been realized and a goal that is their right.