



SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by the Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta at the Humanitarian Affairs segment of the U.N. Economic and Social Council

29 June 2016

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Oscar R. de Rojas
Permanent Observer**

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak and we take the occasion to warmly congratulate you again for your election to the presidency of this Council.

The Sovereign Order of Malta's commitment to humanitarian action is now over 900 years old. From its inception, its service to the poor and the sick has been carried out without any regard to religion, ethnicity or nationality. The call to "leave no one behind" is deeply enwoven in our history, our mission and our humanitarian work.

Just a month ago we met in Istanbul at the historic first World Humanitarian Summit. The Order of Malta participated actively in it, from endorsing all the core commitments, to taking part in the plenary, special sessions and side events, and co-sponsoring various other activities. Today, we would like to reaffirm our determination to help implement all the results of the WHS. The Order of Malta will continue to provide populations in need with unimpeded humanitarian access using its tools as a religious, diplomatic and humanitarian actor and to promote dialogue and reconciliation among parties in conflict.

In this context, in his plenary statement at the summit, our Grand Chancellor said "The Sovereign Order of Malta wishes to reinforce and expand its humanitarian diplomacy, both on a bilateral and multilateral level, with the following aims: Obtain access to victims; ensure the security of humanitarian workers; promote the codification and implementation of humanitarian law in the broadest sense; and work towards ensuring the concrete respect of humanitarian law by both governments and non-state actors".

Also as in Istanbul, we would like to emphasize the importance of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in humanitarian action and we celebrate the fact that the WHS Special Session on "Religious Engagement"

resulted in a “Charter for Faith-Based Humanitarian Action”, which very much reflects the substance of the earlier Symposium organized by the Order of Malta in Geneva in May 2015.

Indeed, the work of FBOs is often very effective and fast, as they already have a strong on-site cooperation network through existing faith communities. Moreover, FBOs are usually prepared to stay in the field for longer periods of time. This enables them to build up trust and through this, are often of great importance to reconciliation processes. For example, the Order has been active in Lebanon for over three decades now. Providing help to all people has made our centers a sign of solidarity and coexistence.

And, lastly, humanitarian aid is about needs, but often spiritual needs are neglected. FBOs fill this gap by providing individuals with a sense of purpose and by elevating their assistance beyond the material component.

We thus renew the call to all international humanitarian organizations, Member States and FBOs to increase efforts to strengthen the synergies between all humanitarian stakeholders. To help achieve this goal, the Order of Malta will host a follow-up meeting in 2017 between religious actors and other stakeholders with a view to improve dissemination and implementation of international humanitarian law and to join a coordinated global effort to mobilize States, civil societies and global leaders to enhance respect for humanitarian law and principles and the rights of refugees and migrants.

On the subject of refugees and migrants, the Order of Malta is currently assisting refugees and migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa and those crossing the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, including a presence on rescue boats and provision of health care and other assistance in the countries of arrival. We are following closely the preparations for the High-level meeting on 19 September and intend to be an active participant in it. That crucial meeting will be another important milestone in the promotion of humanitarian ends and ensuring the dignity of every human being.

Thank you, Mr. President