



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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COUNSELLOR

TO THE

THIRD COMMITTEE

[ITEM 64] RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

14 OCTOBER, 2016

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Madam Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the protection of the rights of children; it is a subject of extreme importance to the Sovereign Order of Malta.

The paramount right of every child is the right to survive and develop – physically, mentally, and spiritually. While the child mortality rate is decreasing every year, in 2015, 5.9 million died under the age of 5. That number is unacceptably high and the rate of its decrease is too slow. When millions of children are deprived of survival and development, those millions are deprived of all the rights that follow; and we are deprived of the bright futures that might have been.

75% of all child deaths occur within the first year of life; more than half of these occur during the first month. Most are preventable with better prenatal, maternal and neonatal care. The Order of Malta continues its commitment to the care of the youngest wherever they are. In Bethlehem, in the West Bank, the Order's Holy Family Hospital provides the region a place for women to give birth under safe and modern conditions. This hospital delivers 70% of all babies in the district and is open to all regardless of nationality, religion or income. The Order continues its commitment to mothers and newborns elsewhere throughout the world. In Antananarivo, Madagascar, the Order operates the Sainte Fleur maternity and neonatal wards. In Elevagnon, Togo, and in Kampala, Uganda we are building new maternity centers. In Mtendele, Tanzania, where 25,000 Burundian refugees are hosted, we will soon open a maternity unit to help secure the situation for expectant mothers and babies.

Lack of access to food and clean water further threatens the survival and development of children. In projects across the globe, the Order is actively engaged in combating maternal and child malnutrition. The nutrition unit of the Order's hospital in Maracha, Uganda, is one example, where 95% of patients go home well. In Cambodia, Malteser International, the worldwide relief arm of the Order, promotes better maternal-infant nutrition and clean water in one hundred and seventy-five villages located in provinces where more than half of children suffer malnourishment. In Togo and Benin, our nutritionist nurses visit isolated villages to assess for and treat undernourished children.

Lastly, the Order wishes to express its concern over the tragedy that is the acute rise in displaced children. According to UNICEF, the number of refugee children has risen 75% in the last 5 years. 28 million children have fled conflict, and a further 20 million have left home in search of better living conditions.

In two days last week in the Straits of Sicily, where our medical teams have engaged in joint rescue operations with the Italian Coast Guard, our doctors delivered at sea 3 babies born to migrants fleeing Libya. This dramatic event highlights the fact that, sadly, we see an ever rising number of the most vulnerable among the refugees and migrants we help. Child refugees and migrants, many unaccompanied, are at risk of malnutrition, disease, lack of education, exploitation and abuse. In response to this crisis, the Sovereign Order of Malta has strengthened its actions to address the mounting demand for humanitarian aid to refugees and migrants, including children.

Currently, 2.3 million Syrian children are refugees. Within Northern Syria, in Iraq, and in Lebanon and Turkey, Malteser supports 3 medical centers, 1 field hospital, 1 clinic, 1 rehabilitation hospital, and 6 mobile medical units. Altogether, last year, these provided care to 170,000 sick and wounded refugees, including 5,000 children within Syria alone.

Outside of the Middle East, in Germany, where 1 out of 3 refugees are supported by the Order, we are responsible for 140 facilities for more than 44,000 individuals. From Hungary to the Ukraine, Uganda to South Sudan, Myanmar and elsewhere, we continue our commitments to providing medical assistance to refugees, most especially children.

In conclusion, the promotion and protection of the rights of children is fundamental to the Sovereign Order of Malta's 900 year old mission of care for the sick and vulnerable. Lack of adequate medical care, food, and protection – increasingly exacerbated by displacement – imperils children's fundamental right to live and thrive and all their rights that follow. The Order of Malta reaffirms the commitment and desire of its 13,000 members, 80,000 volunteers, and 20,000 medical and relief professionals to work with the UN and its member states in ensuring that children are everywhere cared for, educated, nurtured, and protected.

Thank you.