



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

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN GENÈVE

***Human Rights Council – 32nd Session
Interactive Dialogue on Violence against Women
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta
Geneva, 17 June 2016***

Mr. President,
Madam the Special Rapporteur,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation thanks the Special Rapporteur for her comprehensive report and supports the processes she identifies to address the causes and consequences of violence against women. We are discussing a matter of continued serious concern which directly affects the lives of millions of women around the world. As the number of conflicts increases, more and more women are victims of atrocities and it is particularly disturbing that the international community is failing to address the root causes and prevent violence against women in numerous conflict situations.

Political will to improve women's role in participation in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding and the full respect of existing international legal and human rights instruments are critical to achieving effective solutions. It is therefore urgent that States comply with this legal framework and ensure its implementation on the regional, national and local levels. The Special Rapporteur's intention to propose special measures to address this normative challenge and the implementation gap is most welcome.

Integration of women in every sector of society is a crucial aspect of violence prevention. However, certain existing social and cultural norms and attitudes deny women and girls their human dignity, as they not only fail to protect them, but even allow violence to be perpetrated. Furthermore, the underreporting of sexual violence and the lack of prosecution of perpetrators make it extremely difficult to reduce and resolve such violence. Consequently, it is essential for both local and national authorities to cooperate closely with civil society and work across all religions and cultures to ensure effective investigation and documentation, as well as consistent and rigorous prosecution. In this context the Order of Malta wishes to emphasize the special role of **faith-based organizations and religious institutions**. Their presence before, during and after conflict, their close proximity to populations, their special relationship of trust with community members often make them key providers of protection and material and spiritual assistance during crises and their aftermath. Faith-based entities also share a critical responsibility and role in working for peace and reconciliation. We encourage the Special Rapporteur to include this particular feature in the framework of her mandate. Only a strong commitment by members of all faiths and governments to take responsibility in preventing and combating violence against women will enable us to speed up its elimination. It is in this spirit that the Order of Malta is providing daily in numerous parts of the world, psychological and medical treatment, spiritual and legal assistance, as well as social services to women affected and threatened by violence.