



ORDRE SOUVERAIN MILITAIRE ET HOSPITALIER
DE SAINT-JEAN DE JERUSALEM DE RHODES ET DE MALTE

MISSION PERMANENTE D'OBSERVATION AUPRES DE L'OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES
ET DES AUTRES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES A GENEVE

Sovereign Military Order of Malta

60th Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

General Debate

Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann

Permanent Observer

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Mr. Chairman,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

The High Commissioner's opening statement has given us much food for thought and I wish to express my Delegation's appreciation to him for sharing with us key challenges facing the organization in addressing the serious problems met by refugees and internally displaced persons in so many parts of the world.

The Sovereign Order of Malta shares the High Commissioner's concerns on a number of issues, particularly those directly related to the Order's work on the ground. The international community is confronted with an urgent need for strengthened humanitarian action to protect displaced people that are increasingly at the forefront of humanitarian tragedies. Uprooted by violence or displaced by natural disasters, the conditions in which many millions of our fellow human beings are living remain deplorable, as they are left destitute with little or no access to basic services.

Faithful to its mission, the Order of Malta seeks to reduce vulnerability and poverty by providing assistance in the areas most needed such as healthcare, food, water, and shelter. It carries out its work in 120 countries in partnership with local and international humanitarian agencies.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to highlight the Order's response to some of the recent crises that have generated displacement.

In the North-West Frontier Province of **Pakistan** the Order of Malta's worldwide relief organization, Malteser International, deployed medical teams in June and July and distributed hygiene kits to more than 28'000 internally displaced people accommodated by host communities in Mardan District. In his address to this Committee yesterday, Pakistan's Deputy Minister for States and Frontier Regions confirmed that most of the previously internally displaced persons have now returned to their areas of origin and appealed for support for their rehabilitation. Malteser International right now supports returned IDP-families with medical teams after their return home in Swat District. In close consultation and coordination with the District health authorities and the UN-Cluster System, they offer medical services at three local health centres. According to demand also off-station primary health services at easily accessible public places such as schools are planned as an option. In cooperation with its local partner organization, it also runs hygiene campaigns to prevent the outbreak of water borne diseases.

Since the beginning of March, Malteser International has been providing aid to help improve the situation in the IDP camps in Vavuniya in the north and in Pulmoddai in the northeast of **Sri Lanka**. More than 6'300 families have received hygiene articles, volunteers trained by Malteser International give advice to the displaced concerning simple yet necessary hygiene measures and undernourished children are provided with additional vitamin supplements. Furthermore, mobile water tank vehicles are operating in order to improve the shortages of drinking water in the camps and so called gully suckers are in use for sanitation purposes. Malteser International supported the initiatives of other humanitarian agencies and expressed its concerns regarding foreseen severe

hygiene and shelter problems due to the monsoon season ahead. Also, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator's advocacy efforts with the Sri Lankan authorities for the application of humanitarian and protection principles, including improved conditions in the camps, unimpeded humanitarian access and freedom of movement are appreciated. Humanitarian agencies in Sri Lanka strongly request to accelerate and expand the already-commenced release of screened displaced people from camps to either host families or their home areas and to actively involve humanitarian agencies in the implementation of support programmes for the IDPs' return to their home areas - based on the application of humanitarian principles and standards.

Mr. Chairman,

The Order of Malta has continued and expanded assistance programmes in a number of ongoing crises and emergencies.

In July the Security Council expressed its serious concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in **Darfur** and at the recurring attacks on the civilian population. Despite these difficult circumstances, the Order is continuing to provide basic healthcare services to some 90'000 internally displaced persons in remote rural areas in North Darfur. The supply of essential drugs, malaria prevention programmes and the implementation of comprehensive vaccination campaigns are at the heart of these programmes.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo** persistent insecurity and regular attacks by warring factions contribute to the already poor situation of the internally displaced civilians in the eastern part of the country. Thousands of people were forced to leave their homes, land and livestock. In July and August Malteser International provided food distribution which reached about 150'000 of these people in the province of South Kivu.

In **Myanmar**, assistance to the victims of Cyclon Nargis continues in the Irrawaddy Delta whereas in **Thailand** Malteser International is pursuing its work on the Thai-Myanmar border. In two out of the nine existing refugee camps, the organisation guarantees basic medical care and health services for a total population of 33'000 persons. The project provides curative and preventive health care and trains the Karen refugee population to be health staff. In densely populated refugee camps pandemics can spread easily in case of infection. Therefore, comprehensive prevention makes an important contribution to improve the refugees' quality of life.

Mr. Chairman,

In a number of crisis areas humanitarian agencies find that their efforts are all too often placed in jeopardy, due to an insecure environment and lack of access to those in need of assistance. The High Commissioner shared with us yesterday his deep concerns, in particular with regard to staff safety. The Order of Malta is equally alarmed by the escalating insecurity for refugees, displaced persons and humanitarian workers and joins the High Commissioner and previous speakers in urging states to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law in all circumstances.

Thank you.