



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
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Sovereign Military Order of Malta

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

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Plenary Official Statement by:

H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann

Permanent Observer

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Millions of people around the world are affected by natural and man-made disasters, which transform their lives, often within seconds, by bringing on turmoil and despair. In this context of continual human dramas, the Sovereign Order of Malta remains faithful to its mission by directing its efforts towards the poor, the sick and homeless, regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through its presence in 120 countries, it responds to all kinds of disasters, whether the cause be flood or famine, earthquake, hurricane or war, not only by providing immediate practical support such as food, shelter and healthcare, but also by assisting victims rebuild their livelihoods. Our discussions on how **disaster risk reduction approaches and sound recovery practices contribute to poverty alleviation** are therefore of particular interest to the Order's humanitarian activities.

The Order of Malta's worldwide relief agency for humanitarian aid, Malteser International, provides relief to major emergencies in the world, especially in the health sector. The majority of projects focus on ensuring emergency aid in the aftermath of conflicts and natural disasters. However, Malteser International is also committed to link relief, rehabilitation and development. It not only establishes and promotes primary health care services in developing countries, reduces the vulnerability and poverty of those afflicted and provides comprehensive care for refugees and returnees, but it also aims to strengthen communities in order to **build disaster resilience** and contribute to climate change adaptation, in harmony with the principles of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The Order of Malta's efforts to **reduce vulnerability to disasters** have included swift assistance for earthquake victims in Pakistan and Peru, prompt relief for flood and tsunami victims in Mexico, Thailand, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, support for the victims of volcano eruptions in the Democratic Republic of Congo and emergency aid for those affected by Hurricane Katrina in the United States. The Order also remains present in war-torn countries and regions with ongoing or recently terminated conflicts, such as Lebanon, Sudan or Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, the Order's global presence and engagement in the primary health care sector are indicative of its long-term development strategies and its ambition to enable communities to become self-reliant and less risk-prone. By promoting local development, by supporting community-based health services and by improving disaster preparedness capacities for vulnerable groups, it thus contributes to increased awareness in crisis-affected areas and offers **post-disaster recovery** opportunities. In countries as diverse as for instance Pakistan, Myanmar, Vietnam, Kenya, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Order is or has been initiating 'help towards self-help' through education and training, so as to ensure better community resilience and more effective disaster prevention.

With regard to one of the main issues of this Global Platform, the discussion on **disaster prevention through safer schools and hospitals**, we are proud to emphasize that the spirit of this initiative incorporates one of the core guiding principles of the Order of Malta. As already mentioned, there is a very strong dedication towards ensuring access to primary health care for all, especially by means of fighting AIDS, leprosy, tuberculosis and malaria, as well as helping to build hospitals and empowering communities through health-related training. In a similar vein, we are determined to render schools in disaster-affected regions more child-friendly by ensuring that water, hygiene and sanitation facilities as well as meals are available for every child.

Mr. Chairman,

The challenges before us can only be met provided every member of the international community engages in sustained cooperation. The Sovereign Order of Malta therefore supports the United Nations in its efforts to build a multistakeholder system based on strong partnerships and is pleased to participate in the constructive dialogue taking place during this second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction on issues that are of the utmost importance for the human dignity and humanity as a whole.

Thank you.