



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

MISSION PERMANENTE D'OBSERVATION AUPRÈS DE L'OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES  
ET DES AUTRES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES À GENÈVE

# **Sovereign Military Order of Malta**

## **World Health Organization**

### **69<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly**

General Debate

Geneva, 25 May 2016

Statement by:

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Counsellor

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Mr. President,  
Madam Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

On every continent the Sovereign Order of Malta is engaged in active aid on the ground, providing medical, psychosocial and social care to the world's marginalized. Its members, permanent volunteers and professional medical staff form an efficient network that includes everything from emergency relief for refugees and the displaced living through war and conflict, to intervention in areas hit by natural disasters, hospital work, medical care and social services. The list is long, the reach is wide, and the task is an enduring commitment. The Order of Malta's programs are carried out independently or within a framework of partnerships with governments and international agencies. It both supports and directly manages medical centers, hospitals and homes for the elderly, as well as first-aid and ambulance crews in 120 countries.

The Order of Malta has a long-standing cooperation with WHO in the field. Furthermore, as a member of the Global Health Cluster, Malteser International, the Order of Malta's international relief agency, is presently entrusted with the development of capacity building measures for health cluster personnel.

Despite the universal right to health, thousands of people across the world live without basic healthcare. Too often in situations of war, violence and poverty the people with greatest needs are deprived of adequate medical treatment and drugs. Our doctors try to bridge this gap in mobile clinics, hospitals and day-care centers. The Holy Family Maternity Hospital in **Bethlehem** is the only possibility for women of the region to obtain highest quality medical care. Its mobile clinic reaches isolated villages in the West Bank, caring for women whose medical needs would otherwise go unmet. Other medical interventions are unique, like healthcare for inmates in **Nairobi's** prisons, while others are pioneering such as advanced therapy to treat dementia. In **California** people unable to afford health insurance receive free healthcare in our clinics. Further south, in **Bolivia** dialysis treatment is available in the country's second largest city, El Alto, for those who cannot afford it.

As for treating *neglected diseases* the Order persistently continues its work in combating major epidemics of tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS – still the prime causes of death in Africa. Its relief corps in **South Africa** provides life-changing HAART drugs for people living with HIV. It distributes medicines via its mobile clinic to patients living alone in poverty and isolation. In northern **Uganda**, where droughts and overpopulation have had disastrous effects, Malteser International fights against moderate and severe malnutrition of children. In **Haiti**, where the Order of Malta has been active since 1995, cholera-prevention programs are vital to stop the spread of the disease.

Furthermore, Malteser International is combating the Zika outbreak in **Colombia**. Prevention measures and education on the diseases are still ongoing in two provinces of northern Colombia as well as the distribution of family kits to about 2.000 families. One year after the devastating earthquake in **Nepal**, Malteser International continues working, north and east of Kathmandu, where it is planning to build three health posts in remote and isolated areas, replacing the present tent-based Basic Health Unit.

In the *Middle East*, Malteser International supports since 2014 a hospital in Bab Al-Salam camp in **Syria**: 4 health stations (including 2 mobile health units); one production site for medical oxygen and support of the pediatric hospital in Aleppo. During 2016, the hospital service in Bab Al-Salam as well as the mobile health units will be expanded. Two blood banks will be set-up as well as a repair garage for ambulances to ensure the lifesaving transport possibilities. Across **Lebanon** the Order of Malta runs 28 medical facilities that serve both the local population and refugees. In Kilis, **Turkey**, Malteser International plans to operate a basic health unit from the premises of its rehabilitation center. Its mobile medical teams are set to grow further. The repair and reconstruction of additional health centers and the establishment of mobile medical teams is also planned in northern **Iraq**, where Malteser International already provides medical treatment in the region's refugee camps.

In the wake of the influx of refugees and migrants into *Europe* the Order of Malta scaled up its efforts in **Hungary**, **Austria** and **Germany** to assist these countries' capacities in facing the increase of new arrivals. Volunteers were deployed in train stations and reception centers. Medical care is also offered to asylum seekers housed in temporary camps. It is estimated that about one in three of the refugees who arrived in Germany in 2015 were assisted by special structures managed by the Order's German association. A variety of services are offered from immediate help, first aid and accommodation for people arriving to care for refugees in central facilities, towns and communities.

Finally, the Order of Malta continues its rescue activities in the *Mediterranean and the Aegean Seas*. Since 2008, doctors and nurses of the Italian Rescue Corps have been operating of its Italian Navy and Coastguards' vessels in the Strait of Sicily and since 2015 they are also working on board a Migrant Offshore Aid Station MOAS, in close cooperation with the Greek Coastguards and local authorities. By providing healthcare at sea they are saving lives of refugees fleeing conflicts along the Aegean Sea Route between Turkey and Greece.

Mr President, systematic violations of International humanitarian law by all parties prevent us from fulfilling our specific mission of assisting and above all providing medical care to local populations.

We welcome the Secretary General's recent remarks to the Security Council on health care in armed conflicts and join the international community in calling on all parties to armed conflicts to shoulder their moral and legal responsibility by complying with their obligations under International law.

Thank you.