Human Rights Council – 43rd Session –
General Segment

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Geneva, 26th February 2020

Madam President,
Madam High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation congratulates you Madam President and the members of your Bureau on your election to this high office. We look forward to working with you throughout this year and wish you full success in your endeavours.

Allow me to highlight three issues being addressed by the Council, which are a particular priority for the Sovereign Order of Malta.

With regard to the tragedies related to human trafficking, we assist, protect and rehabilitate the victims, mainly migrants, refugees and IDPs. The Order of Malta is engaged in raising awareness against this form of contemporary slavery and taking action locally in cooperation with Governments, international and local organizations, especially religious communities and the private sector. The dignity and rights of these persons must be respected through the implementation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Another category of vulnerable persons that receive our full attention are those with disabilities. In our experience, a rights-based legal approach to promoting the inherent dignity and worth of persons with disabilities, while essential, is insufficient. It is important also, through state and other initiatives, to cultivate communities to which persons with disabilities belong and relationships in which such persons are both cared for and cared about. The Order of Malta, through its medico-social activities, is committed to promoting such communities and relationships.
Madam President,

Taking into account that 84% of the world’s population identifies itself with a religion or belief, we wish to reaffirm the fundamental importance of freedom of religion. We welcome the Council’s efforts, through their Special Rapporteurs, in promoting this right, thus reflecting the liberty of each human being to express its faith or not. In addition to States integrating the Council’s resolutions into their national legislation, authorities and civil society at all levels should be encouraged to take practical action to ensure implementation of these laws. Such steps should include inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, as well as education and faith literacy training, so as to ensure mutual understanding between different communities. Such policies favor peacebuilding efforts and create resilience, while at the same time illustrating the liberty and dignity inherent to every human being.

We are particularly happy to note that this view is increasingly shared by many member states, such as Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Morocco and others who regularly to foster inter-religious dialogue by organizing panel discussions and special events within the United Nations (UN).

The Order of Malta is proud to be part of these developments and will pursue its efforts in these fields through its worldwide humanitarian action and diplomatic network.

Thank you.