



**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 ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**71st Session of the Executive Committee – General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Geneva, 7 October 2020**

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

As the world community is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the Order of Malta wishes to reaffirm that multilateralism is still the most appropriate tool by which we can face the great challenges of our times, in particular forced displacement, migration, poverty, as well as health emergencies.

This year has been severely marked by the Coronavirus crisis which affects our whole planet. The Order of Malta's priority during this period is to stand beside those who feel the consequences of Covid-19 most keenly. Against this background, we have adapted our programs to the changed demands thrown up by the pandemic.

Our international humanitarian relief agency came out early with a Malteser International Global Coronavirus Response Plan. Its priorities are to sustain lifesaving humanitarian operations, particularly by supporting health and WASH systems and to help mitigate the harmful side effects on the most vulnerable populations. Those in urgent need of humanitarian assistance also receive food, non-food items or cash, and psycho-social support if needed. In Northern Uganda for example, our support for the refugees from South Sudan and their host communities is increasingly development oriented. We are also responding to Covid-19 in many other refugee settlements in Uganda, including a new camp in Nakivale for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. At the border to the DRC we also assisted 3'000 new refugees who had fled the Djugu crisis.

In Bangladesh our Refugees' health program in Cox's Bazar is running according to plan although the access to the camps has been further restricted to contain the pandemic. Our health centres in the Rohingya refugee camps were adapted to cope with Covid-19, scaling up preventive measures and equipping medical staff with personal protection equipment (PPE).

With regard to Colombia, we are pleased to report that our medical work with UNHCR in reception centres in Riohacha and Maicao has strengthened our leadership in the health sector, providing services to vulnerable refugees and migrants. In 2020 several thousand medical examinations and consultations were conducted.

Following the massive explosion at the port of Beirut, the Order of Malta's relief activities focused on the rehabilitation of damaged public health centres, the distribution of hygiene and disinfection kits to mitigate Covid-19 transmission, and on mental health activities. Furthermore, the Order of Malta Lebanon is a partner of UNHCR in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LRCP) for displaced and refugee populations.

Moreover, the Order of Malta has set up the platform "Doctor to Doctor" in many countries in Asia, Africa and America: an international network of doctors and health authorities in the field of epidemiology and virology, who meet online to discuss best practices and the latest advancement in medical research.

With regard to the development and universal access of a Covid-19 vaccine we support the UN Secretary-General's and other world leaders' appeal for it to be seen as "a global public good", affordable and available to all. The Order of Malta confirms its commitment to providing assistance for a fair, wide and equitable distribution of such a vaccine and for the promotion of authentic generalized public health.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation at UNHCR's continued outreach to and cooperation with faith-based organizations, as confirmed by the High Commissioner in his opening statement. We welcome the recent announcement that UNHCR and the global movement "Religions for Peace", have decided to form a Multi-religious Council of Leaders to tackle global displacement challenges by strengthening efforts to address the root causes of conflict and displacement, and to support peacebuilding, inclusion and reconciliation.

Mr. President,

My Delegation looks forward to engaging further on these issues in the forthcoming High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges.

Thank you.