



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 Order of Malta

International Organization for Migration

106th Session of the Council

General Debate

Statement by:

H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann

Permanent Observer

Geneva, 24th – 27th November 2015

Check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,
Director General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation congratulates you Mr. Chairman and the Bureau on your election and welcomes the new Member States and Observers to IOM. We also wish to thank the Director General, H.E. Ambassador William Lacy Swing, for his outstanding leadership during a particularly intense year. The international community is confronted daily with mass population movements that represent huge new challenges for both governments and humanitarian actors. The multiplicity of crises has led to unprecedented forced displacement across the world in conjunction with dramatic and complex situations which need to be addressed urgently.

As a contribution to this process, the Sovereign Order of Malta has recently co-organized several conferences. The first was held in September in Munich jointly with the Václav-Havel foundation 'Forum 2000', just as tens of thousands of asylum seekers were arriving at the central railway station. The meeting brought together academics, politicians, members of international organizations, including IOM's representative in Germany, and local practitioners to debate the crisis and discuss proposals for the way forward. It was agreed inter alia that in view of the magnitude of the problem quick decisions must be taken to speed up processing procedures, organize accommodation, qualified personnel to help them, assimilation, jobs. At the same time participants stressed that the response to the crisis must be long-term, and called for the creation of an infrastructure across organizations on the ground.

The second meeting organized by the British think tank '[Forward Thinking](#)' and the Order of Malta was held last month in Rome in the presence of two **Libyan** delegations respectively representing Tobruk and Tripoli. Discussions centered around the challenges posed by the escalating migration influx and the fight against people smuggling on Libyan soil. Participants identified the most immediate challenges to be faced – from a humanitarian, healthcare and security perspective – and defined an agenda for a conference to be extended to other countries and held in the coming weeks. This objective was strongly shared by both delegations present.

The Order of Malta also participated in the **Valletta Summit** held earlier this month between the European Union, associated countries and African countries. The Summit stressed the shared responsibility of Africa and Europe on migration and for the first time tackled the serious problem of migration from Africa to Europe at the highest political level in a conceptual and comprehensive way.

In this context I wish to mention ongoing rescue activities being carried out in the **Mediterranean sea**. Doctors and nurses of the Order of Malta's Italian relief corps are continuing to operate on the Italian Navy and Coastguards' vessels in the Strait of Sicily. Since 2008, these volunteers have been providing first-aid to migrants crammed into unseaworthy boats arriving from North Africa and the Middle East. Since 1st January of this year, these doctors and nurses have spent almost 100,000 hours at sea.

Furthermore, with its network of 80 thousand volunteers worldwide, its national associations and its international relief agency, Malteser International, the Order of Malta is participating in the enormous efforts being made to offer medical care, legal assistance, accommodation and basic necessities to the thousands of people in flight in **Europe, the Middle East and Africa**. The Order of Malta's volunteers are also providing valuable social and psychological aid to the families of refugees and migrants and unaccompanied minors, in constant increase.

Mr. Chairman,

Like IOM, the Order of Malta is actively engaged in preparations for next year's **World Humanitarian Summit** (WHS). In cooperation with the WHS secretariat, the Order organized a Symposium at the Palais des Nations in May on the topic "Religions Together for Humanitarian Action – Reaching out to victims of armed conflicts: the special role of faith-based actors". We are grateful to IOM for having supported this initiative and for having participated in the Symposium, the outcome of which has led to the decision to organize, a "**Global Religious Forum**" (GRF) in support of the WHS which will be held on the day before the Summit. The Order of Malta is working closely with the WHS secretariat and is represented on the steering committee that has been established to oversee and advise the WHS appointed facilitator "Partnership for Faith & Development", on the work plan for the GRF. Assisting the poor and the afflicted is deeply rooted in the teachings of religions. It is therefore important to create awareness and draw public attention, including that of the international humanitarian community, to the unique position of faith based humanitarian organizations, especially in conflict situations. Through the power of their conviction, their reach, their motivation and their longevity, they are able to play a significant and supportive role, especially at the local level, to reduce poverty, alleviate suffering, enhance protection of human life and dignity and promote resilience and reconciliation.

Mr. Chairman,

As we seek solutions to the current migrant crisis our call to action is for measures which are practical and possible, which are embraced by the international community and which provide clearer policies and faster administrative procedures to cope with the influx in a harmonious and humane way. Let us all work together to make the WHS and the resulting Humanitarian Action Plan a success.