



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 ORGANISATIONS IN GENÈVA

**International Organization for Migration - 107<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council  
General Debate  
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann  
Geneva, 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

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

My Delegation joins previous speakers in congratulating IOM on its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary and you, Mr. Chairman and the Bureau, on your election. We welcome the new member states and observers that were admitted during this year. I also wish to express to the Director General our sincere appreciation for his comprehensive report which illustrates clearly IOM's position as a strong partner in to-day's humanitarian architecture.

The enormous scale of global population displacement and the vast need for humanitarian aid triggered the World Humanitarian Summit held last May and the 19<sup>th</sup> September Summit on Migrants and Refugees. The Order of Malta seized these opportunities to affirm its humanitarian engagement by participating actively in plenary sessions, round tables and side events. It is now universally recognized that only meaningful global migration governance is able to address widespread displacement both within and across national borders. In Istanbul our Grand Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed the Order's *"over 900-year old commitment and its present global outreach to people in need"*. He called for the respect of humanitarian law and fundamental humanitarian principles and the strengthening of synergies between all stakeholders, including faith-based organizations of all religions. At the High-Level Meeting In New York our Minister for Health, Humanitarian Action and International Cooperation outlined priorities for immediate action for refugees and migrants and stated that *"the fight against smugglers, traffickers and corruption must become an international obligation"*. He concluded by saying *"to be successful, we must challenge global indifference, fear, and economic selfishness"*.

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to the numerous protracted crisis situations caused by armed conflicts and natural disasters, we have witnessed over the past year a further increase of movements of people and of humanitarian problems. In light of these developments the Order of Malta stepped up its rescue operations at sea. In December 2015, in the wake of the dramatic influx of migrants and refugees trying to reach the Greek islands from the Turkish coasts, its **Italian Rescue Corps** launched the **Aegean SAR** Operation (Search and Rescue). Working onboard a Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), in close cooperation with the Greek Coastguards and local authorities, its medical teams saved 2'000 people during its three-month mission. The same Relief Corps continues its operations started in 2008 in the Strait of Sicily and on the island of Lampedusa. Working on the Italian Coastguards', Navy and Guardia di Finanza vessels our medical teams have rescued over 55'000 people.

In light of ongoing military operations, the Order of Malta's worldwide relief agency, **Malteser International**, has further expanded its emergency assistance in the **Middle East**. In **Iraq** preparations to provide care to those caught up in the effects of the latest wave of violence are ongoing, in particular at arrival points for people fleeing from Mosul and surrounding areas. In **Turkey** Malteser International runs numerous medical projects and supports education facilities for Syrians. It also provides medical care for around 300'000 people living near the Syrian-Turkish border. The update on **Syria** is bleak, as neither the delivery of supplies nor the movement of staff to and from the Pediatric Hospital it supports in Aleppo has lately been possible. Medical staff were forced to abandon the heavily damaged building after it was struck again by two missiles on 18 November. In **Lebanon** the Order of Malta seeks to improve health care for refugees by strengthening health structures, equipping Primary Health Care Centers and running mobile clinics.

In response to the large arrivals of migrants and refugees in **Europe**, the Order of Malta set up programs in Germany, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria and Slovakia, which include material assistance, shelter, medical, juridical and administrative services and local integration. In Lithuania and Romania the authorities are exploring opportunities to get civil society involved in activities of migrants' support and integration.

Mr. Chairman,

The Order of Malta serves humanity in 120 countries on all continents. Assisting people on the move, particularly the most vulnerable, is amongst our top priorities and we are keen to share our long and worldwide experience by participating in the ongoing humanitarian dialogue and contributing to the process leading up to the Global Compact on Migration. Within this framework our Mission in New York participated last month in the Special Dialogue organized by the Global Forum on Migration and Development at which the Director General outlined IOM's perspective and called for comprehensive, coherent and cooperative action. We not only share his views, but also wish to assure him of our continued support and we look forward to pursuing our cooperation.