



**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**

**International Organization for Migration - 112th Session of the Council
General Debate**

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Geneva, 1st December 2021**

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

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been numerous situations in which the need to control it has been invoked to restrict access to international protection and to limit the rights of migrants. Reports of refoulement, rejection at the frontier and denial of access to rescued persons are concerning examples. There is a definite need to ensure that exceptional measures adopted in situations of emergency are also consistent with international humanitarian and human rights law. Moreover, the pandemic has affected the ability of States to provide basic services to migrants, refugees and host communities, often worsening their pre-existing situation of vulnerability.

To this effect, the Sovereign Order of Malta continues its work with affected countries and local partners in order to improve the living conditions of displaced persons. Our main actions focus on providing medical assistance with a special emphasis on WASH programmes, as measures and supplies required to attain adequate standards of hygiene are key tools to contain the propagation of COVID-19 and other diseases. Our international humanitarian relief agency, Malteser International, carries out many such projects for IDPs, for example in Myanmar's Kayin State, in the settlements of Ukiya and Teknaf in Bangladesh, as well as in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In North-eastern Nigeria, assistance to IDPs and host communities also includes psychosocial support for women and girls exposed to gender-based violence and the launch of income generating activities. In this context cooperation with IOM is ongoing in several areas such as in Wau's Masna Collection Centre in South Sudan and assisting migrants and refugees from Venezuela in Colombia.

These examples illustrate the Order of Malta's full support for IOM's work in emergency situations and our unwavering commitment to human dignity and human rights for all without discrimination. We encourage all States to deploy their best efforts to alleviate the suffering of displaced populations by protecting migrants and other vulnerable groups from the effects of the pandemic by means of timely access to health services, vaccines and hygiene-related supplies.

Thank you.