



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

72nd Session of the Executive Committee – General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann, Permanent Observer
Geneva, 6 October 2021

Madam President,
High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation thanks the High Commissioner for providing us with a broad overview of the serious challenges faced by UNHCR which are growing in scale and complexity. We are confronted with protracted violent conflicts, the effects of climate change, and growing food insecurity which are the main drivers of multiple emergencies. The global pandemic of Covid-19 has accentuated the need for the international community to take urgent collective action to find solutions to these problems.

It is a top priority for the Sovereign Order of Malta to assist displaced populations by being fully involved in crisis areas. In these endeavours UNHCR is an important partner for the Order of Malta's international humanitarian relief agency, Malteser International, which continues to increase its refugee-related activities. Most projects designed to benefit refugees are intended to provide an equal benefit to refugees and host communities and they can therefore be extremely diverse and far-reaching, particularly in countries which suffer from the systematic effects and social pressures of flight and forced migration

In **Africa**, Malteser International is assisting refugees from the Central African Republic and South Sudan in the Democratic Republic of Congo, IDPs and returnees in Nigeria, as well as refugee and host communities in Uganda.

In **Asia** the extremely precarious situation in Afghanistan is of deep concern. Malteser International is ready to provide financial support for humanitarian assistance to IDPs in and around Kabul when and if circumstances advise, as well as to refugees through its teams in Pakistan in the form of healthcare provision, WASH and cash grants. In Bangladesh the emphasis remains on the improvement of the health and nutrition situation of refugees in Cox's Bazar, while in Myanmar the focus is on the reintegration of refugees through improved

access to social infrastructure and the promotion of an inclusive peace process in Kayin State, as well as emergency relief for conflict-affected populations in the Rakhine and Shan States. Refugees in the Thailand-Myanmar border shelters continue to receive health and WASH services, capacity strengthening and preparedness for their return.

The Order of Malta's ongoing programs in the **Middle East** focus on care for refugees, IDPs and host communities in the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and in Lebanon, as a partner of UNHCR in the Crisis Response Plan. In Iraq the aim is to improve the general conditions for the return of refugees and IDPs to the Ninewa Plains.

In **South America**, the Order of Malta has a fruitful cooperation with UNHCR in assisting Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia. The goal is to integrate them into host communities with housing, medical and food aid, as well as bridge health gaps and provide cash assistance.

Madame President,

In concluding, allow me to refer to the Interfaith Forum 20 entitled "A Time to Heal" which was held last month in Bologna, hosted by the Italian G20 presidency. On this occasion the Order of Malta's Minister for Foreign Affairs presented a Compact called "**Religions in Action**", the key findings of which stem from the Order's experience from working in the field. In his address to the Forum he said: "Humanitarian intervention in conflict theatres should always acknowledge the importance of adopting a holistic approach, whereby the local social and cultural values and beliefs are embedded and moulded with the operational schemes. The aim of the Compact is therefore to support religious communities and faith-based organisations (FBOs) that dedicate their social and spiritual resources to help mitigate the effects of conflict and enhance the delivery of humanitarian support. The document appeals to the moral values that are universally shared, by those with faith and other persons of good will, and which are committed to the protection of human life and dignity."

Thank you