



SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA

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56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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Statement by Mrs. Fiamma Arditi Manzo Counsellor

(Check Against Delivery)

Madame Chairwoman,

I am honored to address the Fifty-Sixth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. The Order would like to commend the Commission on its important work and congratulates the members of its bureau for their knowledgeable leadership of this Session.

Combating poverty, disease and suffering, regardless of gender, race, religion or nationality, has been at the heart of the Order's activities for more than 900 years. The Order's many hospitals, hospices and medical services run by 100,000 trained volunteers, doctors and medical personnel make up an exceptional network permanently present in 120 countries, often in rural areas where healthcare clinics and hospitals are scarce. The Order is committed to using this network of medical services to improve the lives of women.

Madame Chair,

The Order of Malta finds it unacceptable that every day around the world, approximately 1,000 women die from childbirth or pregnancy-related complications; 99 percent of these maternal deaths occur in developing countries. This is partly due to a lack of satisfactory healthcare clinics and education. One of the focuses of the Order is to establish and promote primary healthcare services. For example, the Order's **Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem** has recently celebrated its twentieth year of service to women and infants, and possesses the only neonatal department in the Palestinian territories. The Order has also recently initiated a **24-hour neonatal and prenatal clinic in rural Pakistan**. This important clinic provides healthcare to pregnant women around the clock in an area where the next nearest clinic is over 23 kilometers away.

The Order also runs **mother and child clinics** in other rural and impoverished areas around the globe. These clinics provide pre- and post-natal education, vaccinations and feeding programs for severely

malnourished children. Clinics also work to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission from mother to child when necessary. These mother-child clinics and medical programs exist in the **Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, Cameroon, Congo, Sudan, South Sudan** and many other countries.

Madame Chair,

The Order of Malta notes that medical care is also essential for those who have experienced violence against women and girl children, and is working diligently to provide services for these victims. In **Syria**, the Order's activities include a **mother and child protection project** at Bab Toumah and Damascus. The Order also runs a center for the protection of young girls in Aleppo. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** where rape has often been used as an instrument of war, the Order has also extended its activities in **medical and psychological support for these victims of sexual violence**.

Madame Chair,

The Order of Malta recognizes that the status of women must also be improved through the promotion of gender equality, particularly in education and economic participation. The Order has initiated projects in **Viet Nam**, where women will be provided with educational support for alternate means of income. In **Namibia**, the Order supplied equipment to establish a sewing school for women whose husbands died from AIDS, so that they can provide for themselves. In **Rumbek, South Sudan**, the Order has helped to build a **secondary school** principally designated for the education of girls. The Order of Malta pledges to continue to increase its involvement in improving the socioeconomic standing of women around the world.

Madame Chair,

In summary, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta has worked diligently in providing healthcare clinics and educational services to women and girls within rural communities. Although much progress has been made, I will take this opportunity to recognize that there is still much work to be done on this pertinent topic of the advancement of women. The Order of Malta is grateful for this opportunity for exchange and looks ahead to further collaboration with the United Nations, Member States, NGOs and other groups to strengthen the global position of women and girls.

Thank you.