

Medium Version

Grand Chancellor's statement at the Marrakesh conference

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

Allow me first to express my gratitude to His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, and to His Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations for convening this conference and for the warm welcome.

It is an honour for the Sovereign Order of Malta to have participated actively in this process since the very beginning.

We agree with all the 23 objectives laid down in the Compact, even if such a document is necessarily a compromise of different opinions and we would have wished that some principals would have been phrased more concretely and strongly. We regret that a small number of countries have decided at the last moment not to sign the Compact. We firmly believe that the Compact contains a balanced approach in the interest of all countries concerned affirming the basic rights of migrants on one side, but also addressing strongly the threats of human trafficking and other illegal practices.

We acknowledge that migration provides opportunity and benefits for the migrants, host communities and communities of origin. However, when poorly regulated it can create significant challenges. Our fundamental mission, for over nine centuries, has been to provide humanitarian assistance to the sick, the poor and the vulnerable. Migrants often fall well within these categories. The Order does not follow any political or economic agenda, and puts the human life and dignity at the centre of our action.

We believe that raising walls and sealing borders will not lessen the influx of migrants, and do not represent far-sighted solutions to an epochal phenomenon that will continue for years to come. We need to set up legal pathways, agreements with countries of origin and transit, better and more humane facilities in transit and destination countries for a safe, orderly and regular migration.

Moreover, we welcome the specific reference to the role of religious institutions and faith-based organisations in the implementation of the Global Compact, which are often trusted first responders and long-term community partners in crisis situations. In Lebanon the Order implements projects in cooperation with all religious communities, with medical centres and mobile units for the benefit of refugees, internally displaced persons and the local population. The Order provides medical training to Libyan instructors in search and rescue at sea.

For several years we have been active in search and rescue operations, particularly in the Mediterranean Sea, where our Italian Relief Corps cooperates with the Italian Coast Guard as well as other countries' authorities, in saving more than 200.000 people in the last 10 years.

In the country of arrival, it is crucial to guarantee that labor law and recruitment mechanisms are fair and ethical and that they protect migrant workers against all forms of exploitation. The Order has been closely engaged in international cooperation against trafficking in persons. Two special ambassadors of the Order to monitor and combat trafficking in persons, based respectively in Geneva and in Lagos, have been appointed.

We believe that we should minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin. Migration should never be an act of desperation. Disaster risk reduction and reconstruction, for example, are an integral part of our worldwide humanitarian relief agency, Malteser International's projects.

We provide assistance to persons in need regardless of their nationality, ethnicity or religion in a spirit of solidarity and generosity and we support a quality reception fostering care and access to basic services such as education and healthcare in view of the best possible integration. The Relief Corps of the Order in France, for instance, offers legal assistance to migrants.

The Order of Malta's diplomatic relations with 108 States is an essential asset in ensuring the effectiveness of its humanitarian action. The Order is implementing hundreds of projects facilitated by the signature of cooperation agreements with other governments and international organizations. We believe that international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration must be strengthened.

Finally, we confirm our commitment to the "*International Migration Review Forum*". The Order will participate actively in this global platform on the implementation of the Global Compact.

Thank you, Mr. President.