



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

70th Session of the Executive Committee – General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Geneva, 9 October 2019

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation thanks the High Commissioner for his comprehensive and wide-ranging opening statement. We share his concerns on the current situation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons. The inspiring contributions during the High-level segment on statelessness addressed the complexity of the problem. Indeed, the lack of citizenship undermines human dignity and human development potential, which is why we must join forces to call on all States, concerned international organizations and civil society to cooperate and act.

The longer refugees stay in camps, the greater it increases the risk of them becoming stateless. However, the priority of many refugees is to return to their homes and they do not particularly consider applying for citizenship, which would ensure more socio-economic rights and directly contribute to their well-being. This aspect needs to be taken into account when assessing the risk of statelessness.

The Sovereign Order of Malta, through its global humanitarian action, aims at addressing the challenges and obstacles impeding the full enjoyment of equal citizenship rights, especially for migrants, refugees and IDPs. In **France** and **Germany**, our National Associations provide legal and administrative assistance to those, often in retention centres, applying for asylum or citizenship, in close cooperation with the relevant authorities. Several projects are in place to facilitate their integration into society, helping them become familiar with the culture of the host country, while at the same time offering medical and psycho-social care.

As the High-Commissioner underlined, permanent resettlement with the future possibility of being granted citizenship, is one of the durable responses to the global displacement crisis. The barrier to attaining citizenship is one of the most powerful instruments of exclusion, this is particularly the case when and where it affects minorities. One of the main causes of forced displacement is ethnic and religious persecution leading to intra-state conflicts.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to share with you a few examples of the Order of Malta's activities in 120 countries, whether they be of origin, transit or arrival.

In **Asia**, Malteser International, our worldwide relief agency, has been present in **Myanmar** since the beginning of the displacement crisis of the Rohingya people, providing emergency medical care and basic supplies. The program in Northern Rakhine State has been continuously affected by the ongoing security crisis whereas the project in central Rakhine State is being implemented and could absorb some activities from the access restricted northern part. In **Cox's Bazar camp, Bangladesh**, the focus is on assisting refugees and the host community with primary health care, food security and psychosocial support. In **Afghanistan** basic health care is being provided to returnees, IDPs and host communities in the province of Kabul.

The Order of Malta continues its response to the different and complex situations of displacement in **Africa**, especially, in **Uganda** in several camps for South Sudanese and Congolese refugees. Projects providing access to water, sanitation and health care services are now more development oriented. In **South Sudan**, projects are in place to assist displaced persons and returnees with basic goods, cash and agricultural development so as to foster resilience in communities. Similar programs are being carried out in the **DRC**, the **Central African Republic**, **Nigeria** and **Tanzania**.

In **South America**, within the framework of the Venezuelan displacement crisis, the Order of Malta assists Venezuelan refugees and migrants in **Colombia**. Under a MoU with UNHCR, basic medical care is also provided.

With regard to the **Middle East**, Malteser International continues to support health facilities across Idlib and WASH activities in IDP camps inside **Syria**. It also provides emergency medical aid for conflict-affected IDPs and residents in the Turkish-Syrian border area. In **Turkey** the Order of Malta aims to strengthen the resilience of Syrian refugees through medical and psychological support, in particular for the disabled and refugee children, as well as with vocational training programs. In **Lebanon**, the Order responds to the humanitarian needs of the refugees and host population in their medical facilities, including mobile medical units. It also engages in interreligious dialogue and collaborates with other partners to include spiritual assistance. In **Iraq**, reconstruction and rehabilitation projects are in place for the returnees, including reintegration of IDPs into the labour market, employment promotion, as well as medical and professional training.

The Order of Malta reaffirms its core principles to serve the most vulnerable without any discrimination. Engaging with UNHCR and other partners, including faith-based organisations is essential in preventing and resolving displacement crises.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, the Order of Malts is fully committed to contributing to the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and looks forward to actively participating in the first Global Refugee Forum.

Thank you.