



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

73rd World Health Assembly (by video conference)
General Debate

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Geneva, 19 May 2020

Mr. President,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The Sovereign Order of Malta is contributing to the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic through its worldwide humanitarian action. It is of greatest importance to reaffirm here the necessity for the broadest possible international cooperation between all stakeholders. We wish to commend the WHO leadership in the fight against coronavirus.

The vital role played by faith-based institutions in this emergency is being widely acknowledged. WHO recognizes that “Religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and faith communities can play a major role in saving lives and reducing illness related to Covid-19”. It published practical considerations and recommendations specifically for them.

The Order of Malta has adapted its medico-social activities and centers, accordingly. Its hospitals, clinics and ambulance services are fully active. It helped establish field hospitals and provided personal protective equipment (PPE), respirators, medication and other essential items to state institutions and hospitals. Malteser International, the Order of Malta’s emergency relief agency, is intensifying hygiene kit distribution and WASH programs, especially for displaced persons in camps.

Furthermore, the Order’s government recently launched the “Doctors to Doctors” project with the aim to gather on a virtual platform, health experts sharing knowledge and strategies. The project is intended to help countries facing socio-political instability, economic challenges, violence and conflicts, to deal with the pandemic.

The Order has also scaled up its social services, distributing more food, water and medication to elderly, homeless, isolated, disabled and terminally ill persons. Psychological hot-lines and online support platforms have been established to provide comfort to all those distressed by the situation.

A number of countries, like Germany, Austria, Hungary, Taiwan and Lebanon supported the works of the Order in fighting Covid-19, both in their countries and in third countries, thus witnessing international solidarity and support where it was mostly needed.

Thank you.