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**STATEMENT**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
HIGH-LEVEL EVENT ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**New York, 25 September, 2008**

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Mr. President,  
Esteemed Delegates,

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta is grateful for this opportunity to deliver our view point on the crucial topic of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta would also like to express its highest congratulations to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for their wise guidance in organizing this important High-level Event and for highlighting MDGs as an area of focus for the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of this Assembly. It is only with leadership of their caliber that the United Nations, our most indispensable international institution, can come back from the current crisis in resources and personnel to emerge even more effective and respected worldwide. From the onset, the Order has pledged to continue expanding our cooperation with the United Nations on MDG issues, particularly in the field of humanitarian assistance and sustainable development, and we reiterate this pledge today.

The Order of Malta considers the Millennium Development Goals as an example of the "preferential option for the poor" teachings of the two most recent Popes. Combating poverty, along with diseases and sufferings, which are other MDGs, has been at the heart of the Order's activities for more than 900 years. Since its founding in the eleventh century, the Order of Malta has historically directed its efforts towards the poor, the sick and homeless, regardless of race, religion or nationality. The Order's 12,500 members, 80,000 permanent volunteers and professional medical staff, and 13,000 doctors, nurses and stretcher-bearers make up an exceptional network permanently present in 120 countries, providing hospitals, hospices, and medical services. These activities are carried out with great expertise, often by the Order's world-wide relief service, Malteser International.

## Poverty and Hunger

With respect to the first MDG, to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger," the Order is saddened by the unfortunate fact the increased prices of necessary commodities threatens to push another 100 million people or more into absolute poverty. This is despite an overall per capita GDP growth in developing countries worldwide. This is increasingly one of the greatest challenges to the realization of our goals on poverty.

Background papers for this meeting highlight the need to ensure development and universal health services for underserved populations in slums. The improvement of slums is a unique grassroots opportunity for reaching the MDGs, and the Order of Malta has considerably expanded its activities in these most disadvantaged areas. For example, in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, the Order finances numerous health centers and operates far reaching programs for treatment of tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

The fight against hunger is one of the most challenging parts of the MDGs. Inflated food prices, unfair trade regulations and climate change are among our largest obstacles. The Order of Malta demonstrates its substantial commitment to eliminating hunger in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. There we oversee nutrition centers for undernourished and malnourished children. At the same time, we distribute seeds and small livestock to their parents and teach them about planting and nutrition. The Order is grateful to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Program (WFP) for partially funding these initiatives and working as partners towards meeting goals on hunger with a focus on sustainability.

In Darfur, the Order of Malta has stepped up its child nutrition program. In a four month period, over 5,875 children were monitored, diagnosed, and entered into an integrative food program. At the same time, mothers are given training on hygiene and health measures to follow when preparing food. Besides tackling the problem of the lack of food in these areas, health workers are engaged in vaccination campaigns for under-five-year-olds and providing prenatal care for pregnant women. In El Fasher last June, the Order took part in a meeting of the Security Council with local Darfur authorities.

This provided an opportunity to ask the Security Council and UNAMID, the African Union's operation in Darfur, to facilitate access to the region to help the work of humanitarian organizations.

Successful progress towards the first MDG is key to more rapid progress towards all eight Goals. The international community must look to the short term agenda and do as much work by 2010 to ever hope to succeed by 2015

### Education

The Order of Malta works towards the goal on education by increasing the availability of education in developing countries, particularly for girls. For example, the Order has established kindergartens in Sao Paulo and Brasilia, Brazil, while giving job training and employment to unmarried mothers. We have a medical center in Milot, Haiti, which educates 600 children in addition to meeting medical needs of women and children. The Order administers schools in western Afghanistan for 20,000 children, 40% of whom are girls.

### Health

The MDGs regarding health are of particular importance to the Order of Malta. The Order has been working towards the MDGs in health in Cambodia after its 30 year civil war. We have carried out a comprehensive community-based maternal child health project there. Infant health, maternal health and HIV/AIDS converge in the issue of mother to child transmission of the virus. In Mexico, the Order of Malta's program brings infected women into prenatal care and because of this, all have given birth to healthy children. There, as in the many countries with Order of Malta programs, we align ourselves with efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals. On five continents the Order of Malta operates clinics and hospitals for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. These are all diseases that disproportionately affect the world's poorest people. The MDGs on health, particularly numbers four, five and six, are interconnected. Failure on any one of them is likely to slow progress on the others.

We are grateful to weigh-in on such an important theme and we are honored to partner with Member States and the dedicated professionals of the United Nations on our common goals. We are convinced more than ever of the importance of the MDGs, which cover the spectrum of human rights and social justice issues that are at the core of the Order of Malta's *raison d'etre*. With the continued leadership and support of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, these goals become more realizable everyday. We are emboldened by the commitment and admirable leadership of the General Assembly. It is now up to us in the international community to complete the realization of these goals by 2015.