



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

75th session of the Executive Committee – General Debate
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann, Permanent Observer
Geneva, 17 October 2024

Madam President,
High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

The Sovereign Order of Malta welcomes the High Commissioner's renewed call for action in support of refugees and forcibly displaced persons, in a global context marked by multiple humanitarian emergencies arising as a result of conflicts and natural disasters. These have led to unprecedented levels of displacement, thereby creating pressing needs for those who have fled and also for their host communities. These can only be alleviated through coordinated humanitarian efforts, whose sustainability is essential for their long-term effectiveness.

In this context, assistance for refugees and displaced persons is a top priority for the Order of Malta. As recalled by the Grand Master in his address to the UN Summit of the Future, our most significant emergency operations include those undertaken in areas of conflict, where we support those forced to flee the violence, those unable to return to their homes and also their host communities. Our emergency operations in Gaza, Ukraine and Lebanon bear witness to this commitment.

In *Gaza*, our agency Malteser International has been periodically delivering relief consignments in close coordination with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Last month, we completed our third aid delivery to Northern Gaza, amounting to 40 tons of food kits that will benefit about 5,000 people. We are also working on the establishment of medical units that will enable us to provide health care in the region.

In *Lebanon*, our regular operations have been adapted and complemented with emergency measures in order to address the basic needs arising from the current conflict. We successfully evacuated to Beirut around a thousand patients from villages in the southern border, and we have stepped up our assistance to the growing number of displaced civilians. For example, our teams have been providing shelter, healthcare consultations and medications through our medical centres and six mobile medical units, and we have increased the distribution of hot meals and other essential supplies.

In relation to the conflict in *Ukraine*, the Order continues to provide support to IDPs affected by the war and to refugees living in neighbouring countries, including through food and non-food items. Another area in which the Order is particularly active is healthcare. We have been offering mental health care to people at risk, including through telemedicine and mobile units. These services reached almost 45,000 beneficiaries in 2023 alone, with a special focus on children, who are especially vulnerable to trauma caused by violence and associated displacement. In parallel, we have also supported disabled people with equipment and rehabilitation services. In Lviv, we continue to assist IDPs through our shelters, and we are working on the reconstruction of a centre for social support for children and families near Kiev.

In *South Sudan*, many refugees and IDPs lack access to essential services, such as toilets, drinking water, food and health services. Thus, in the northern district of Western Bahr el Ghazal, Malteser International has repaired more than a dozen wells to provide people with drinking water and we continue to offer various WASH services. In parallel, we are working to improve the livelihoods and skills of IDPs, refugees and returnees, through the provision of trainings for the creation of income-generating activities, including agriculture. This aims to foster their social and economic integration into their host communities, while promoting gender equality and peaceful coexistence.

Besides its relief activities in support of people affected by conflict, the Order of Malta is strongly committed to the protection of communities displaced or otherwise affected by natural disasters. The recent floods in *Nigeria* have disrupted the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, who have lost their homes and livelihoods. Among other measures, we have responded by increasing the provision of WASH services in the Bakasi camp and provided other resources to affected communities. In *Bangladesh*, we are supporting 34 villages devastated by Cyclone Remal, and we have delivered clothing and other relief items to hundreds of refugee families affected by heavy rainfall, landslides and flash floods in Cox Bazar. Investing in preparedness and risk reduction remains essential in a global context where climate change is increasingly becoming a driver of human displacement.

Beyond the specific situations that we have referred to, the Order of Malta remains committed to provide assistance to refugees and displaced persons in all regions of the world. In our activities we endeavour to alleviate human suffering and to support host communities, fostering peaceful relations and people-centred solutions that are sustainable over time.

We sincerely hope that the increasing humanitarian challenge posed by growing global displacement will be met by commensurate efforts by the international community. We therefore encourage all participants of the Global Refugee Forum to fulfill their pledges and to increase their commitment to the protection of refugees and forcibly displaced people.

Thank you.