



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

79th World Health Assembly
General Debate – “Reshaping Global Health: A Shared Responsibility”

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Geneva, 20 May 2026

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

Global health can only be transformed when we recognize that health is not a privilege, but a universal right and a shared human responsibility. In a world still shaped by inequality, conflict, displacement, and emerging health crises, reshaping global health means placing human dignity at the center of every effort.

The Sovereign Order of Malta provides medical and humanitarian assistance in around 120 countries, ensuring healthcare is inclusive, accessible, and rooted in solidarity — from emergency relief in conflict zones to fighting neglected diseases and supporting mental health initiatives.

To reshape global health effectively, we must move beyond reactive responses toward long-term, people-centered solutions:

First, primary healthcare systems must be strengthened. Access to basic care, vaccinations, maternal health services, and preventive medicine should never depend on geography or income. Investing in local clinics, mobile medical units, and trained community health workers builds resilience where it is needed most.

Second, global health must prioritize prevention over crisis management. Recent pandemics have highlighted the importance of early warning systems, international cooperation, health education, and rapid cross-border information sharing.

Third, technology and innovation must serve everyone. Digital health tools, telemedicine, and medical research can greatly improve care, but only if they are accessible to vulnerable and underserved populations. The potential of AI and new technologies in humanitarian work is growing rapidly, particularly in improving information-sharing and delivering aid during emergencies. The challenge is ensuring these solutions are affordable, scalable, and adaptable for both emergency response and long-term displacement settings.

Fourth, mental health must become a central pillar of global healthcare policy. Conflict, poverty, displacement, and social isolation continue to cause invisible suffering that deserves equal attention and resources. In Ukraine for instance, we are scaling up our MHPSS and rehabilitation projects thanks

to Taiwanese funding.

Ultimately, reshaping global health begins with recognizing our common humanity. It requires stronger cooperation among governments, international organizations, humanitarian actors, and local communities. Through compassion, neutrality, and long-term presence on the ground, institutions such as the Order of Malta can complement public healthcare efforts worldwide. Together, through shared responsibility and compassionate action, we can build a healthier and more dignified future for all

Thank you.