



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

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Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on health
Health as an enabler of dignity

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann, Permanent Observer
17 June 2026

Mr. President,
Mrs. Special Rapporteur,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation thanks the Special Rapporteur for placing human dignity at the center of her report and for highlighting the intrinsic relationship between health and dignity.

The worldwide humanitarian activities of the Order of Malta embody this understanding of health as a powerful enabler of dignity. In a world increasingly affected by war, displacement, and natural disasters, healthcare must remain firmly rooted in respect for the dignity of every person.

Dignified healthcare in emergencies requires equitable access to care, respect for privacy, informed consent whenever possible, and the participation of patients in decisions concerning their care. It also requires protecting the rights and wellbeing of health and care workers, whose service is indispensable at all times.

Moreover, a dignity-based approach to health should address not only physical and emotional needs, but also spiritual needs. Respect for spiritual and religious convictions forms an integral part of person-centered care. Yet, in some contexts, religious communities may face exclusion or unequal treatment in healthcare settings, undermining both their dignity and their right to health.

Madam Special Rapporteur,
How can a dignity-based approach to health better ensure respect for freedom of religion or belief and the spiritual needs of individuals, particularly in conflict and disaster situations?

I thank you.