



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF SAINT JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

Statement by Professor Michel Veuthey
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Deputy Permanent Observer in Geneva
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Slavery must be eradicated

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me first to express my gratitude to the Permanent Missions of the Holy See and of the Sovereign Order of Malta. I am honored to take the floor right after Archbishop Auza, Apostolic Nuncio.

2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (including Article 4 prohibiting slavery in all its forms) and the 20th anniversary of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (which qualifies certain slavery practices as war crimes and crimes against humanity). Combating trafficking in human beings is one of the most pressing challenges facing the international community today.

The Sovereign Order of Malta would like to applaud the Governments represented here for their initiatives on behalf of victims and survivors of human trafficking. It should be recalled, for example, that the U.S. and Argentina played important roles in the drafting of the **Palermo Protocol**. There are many examples of practices undertaken by these and other countries to protect victims, and I would like to highlight especially the U.S. Department of State's "**Annual Trafficking in Persons Report**" (TIP). It is a unique and very powerful tool against human trafficking. Some of the countries sponsoring this event provide **visas** to foreign nationals who are human trafficking victims and, as important, also for their families which permits victims to be able to testify against the traffickers without fear of retaliation.

Many Governments work with the **private sector** in a variety of ways to ensure that they can help identify and save trafficking victims, including training of flight attendants, emergency hospital workers and others, especially immigration officials who may come in contact with victims.

Time has come for the international community—Governments, religious leaders, international organizations, civil society, business, healthcare, education and opinion formers—for the mobilization for the concrete abolition of slavery.

Today the Sovereign Order of Malta supports over two thousand projects in more than 120 countries for those in need through medical, social and humanitarian work, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or nationality. The Order of Malta would like to reaffirm its commitment to **defend human life and dignity in all its forms** and to bring assistance to the poor, especially the most vulnerable people who are victims of contemporary forms of slavery.

The Sovereign Order of Malta stands with Pope Francis in the fight against human trafficking and would like to support his firm appeals against human trafficking, including the *Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders* signed on the 2nd of December, 2014, on the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. Pope Francis and representatives of Christian denominations and major religions (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism) then committed themselves “*to inspire spiritual and practical action by all global faiths and people of good will everywhere to eradicate modern slavery across the world by 2020 and for all time.*”

The Sovereign Order of Malta and its worldwide relief agency, *Malteser International*, are keenly interested to consider joining forces, to **strengthen synergies, partnerships and alliances** with Governments, United Nations agencies, regional organizations, international and local non-governmental organizations and civil society, including faith-based organizations, in order to prevent violations, protect victims, prosecute perpetrators, share research and

experiences, highlight good practices, raise awareness and mobilize resources. Could we together consider the following:

1. **Raising awareness about human trafficking, and help everyday people identify their role in perpetuating modern slavery**, and thereby opening them to the opportunities to act to reduce their own demand.
2. **Helping prevent slavery by using our existing field services** to raise awareness at the community level for safe movement options.
3. **Supporting and reintegrating** slavery survivors with means and skills to leave and stay out of a trafficked or irregular situation.
4. **Promoting better access to remedies and support for survivors** through a broader range of cross- and multi-sectoral partners.
5. **Bringing demand for slaves into focus** by creating “Slave-free” labels for goods and services, thus providing consumers a tangible role in cutting off demand.
6. **Promoting recognition of demand as the root cause of all forms of modern slavery** and addressing causes and vulnerability such as extreme poverty and lack of local job alternatives, promoting **safe migration** in countries of origin, transit and destination, supporting assistance and protection for **refugees and asylum seekers**, and supporting efforts to prevent and **settle conflicts**, which often are causes of human trafficking.

Looking forward for our exchanges, I would like to wish that our discussions will indeed allow us to share and promote practical solutions to eradicate human trafficking. Many thanks!

New York, 9 November 2018