



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER  
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

---

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY  
H.E. AMBASSADOR OSCAR DE ROJAS,  
PERMANENT OBSERVER  
TO THE  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT  
THEMATIC DISCUSSION ON ENDING POVERTY AND HUNGER

---

25 SEPTEMBER, 2015

---

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Mr. Chairman,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the presentation of this Interactive dialogue, poverty is described as “more than the lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making”. We strongly agree that poverty has to be seen not only as an economical condition, but also from the point of view of access to basic services. I would underline the lack or limited access to primary health facilities, as one of the most important ones. Poverty cuts people off from this access, thereby favoring the growth of diseases, letting them become endemic or even pandemic.

If access to health is not insured, there cannot be economic development and, as already stated in many conventions, this must not only be seen but also be handled as a human right. Fighting poverty has to go hand in hand with the development of health structures. If not, we will again face tragedies like Ebola or the increasing cases of tuberculosis, not to mention HIV-infection, knowing that the moment we stop talking about a disease, it will come back. Prevention, not only in healthcare but also in investment in infrastructure, is and will always be the best way to fight those neglected diseases. And such endemics always send countries, even whole regions, years back in economic development. Because without decent public access to health facilities no development is sustainable, no education can be achieved.

The Order of Malta, everywhere it was present in the past 900 years, has always provided its support to the poor and the needy. Never in history have we ever been as present as we are today, with nearly two thousand projects in 120 countries worldwide, developing health facilities, WASH programs, educational and training projects, post-crisis reconstruction and social assistance. We are actively participating in the preparation of the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul 2016, and accordingly, last May we organized

the “Religions together for humanitarian action” Symposium in Geneva, inscribed in one of the four main pillars of the Summit, summarizing the value of faith based institutions and organizations in reaching people affected by conflicts. Refugees, especially women and children, as well as those living in conflict areas, are particularly exposed to health problems. I strongly invite you to read the report of the Symposium.

I would like to thank you very much for your kind attention and I’m sure that this Summit and the launching of the Sustainable Development Goals will be a great achievement for humanity.