



# Symposium

## "Religions Together for Humanitarian Action"

*Reaching out to victims of armed conflicts: the special role of faith-based actors*

*Geneva, Wednesday, 27 May 2015, 1 – 6 pm*

*Palais des Nations, Room XVII*



## Final Report

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## 1. Introduction

The Sovereign Order of Malta highly appreciates and welcomes the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to convene the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) as a unique opportunity.

*‘The purpose is to set a forward-looking agenda for humanitarian action to collectively address future humanitarian challenges. The aim is to build a more inclusive and diverse humanitarian system committed to humanitarian principles.’* The Order is fully committed to the WHS process and is engaged in its preparatory work. With its worldwide and long experience in humanitarian relief and supporting communities, the Order will contribute to shaping the future of humanitarian action on the road to Istanbul 2016 and beyond.

As preparations for the WHS gathered pace, the Order decided to concentrate on the WHS’s fourth theme: serving the needs of people in conflict. In this context the Order initiated a Symposium to explore how faith-based organisations and institutions and humanitarian actors can better assist and protect civilians in times of conflict and to reflect on the connection between conflict, religion and humanitarian action. The Order was encouraged by the Chief of the WHS Secretariat, Dr Jemilah Mahmood, to organise the Symposium, as the WHS Secretariat is keen to see more faith-based organisations FBOs/institutions involved in the WHS process.

This initiative was driven by the belief that FBOs/institutions make a real difference in humanitarian action and that they could improve the application of their unique strengths (their proximity to communities and effectiveness on the local level because of the trust of populations and local groups, their presence, networks and infrastructure on the ground, and their reach and longevity) in two ways. Firstly, by assisting and protecting people in need, and secondly, by using the moral and unifying power of faith for reconciliation and civil society initiatives in conflict areas – particularly where religion is misused to aggravate conflict.

The Sovereign Order of Malta strongly encourages the use of the Symposium as a starting point for further dialogue between faith-based and secular actors and even more as a catalyst for concrete action and change.

## 2. Executive summary

Responding to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s World Humanitarian Summit initiative, the Sovereign Order of Malta set up a Symposium to consider the question: ‘Do faith-based institutions have an added value in humanitarian action particularly in conflict situations?’

Two high level five-member panels deliberated:

- 1) Present challenges for faith-based institutions (Panel 1)
- 2) Preparing for the future. How can faith-based institutions better assist and protect civilian populations in times of conflict (Panel 2).

The panels considered that FBOs/institutions offer unique strengths: in conflict resolution, in the importance of the spiritual dimension, the proximity of FBOs/institutions to local communities, their strong links on the ground, their position of trust, that all religions recognise a value based approach, that faith is a source of hope and that FBOs/institutions

have a the moral and unifying power. They cautioned that religion can be a source of conflict and that proselytism is a possible danger.

They identified challenges: the need to initiate a discussion with religious leaders on the convergence of shared religious values supporting the protection of human life and dignity, as well as fundamental humanitarian principles (humanity, neutrality, impartiality); the need to create stronger dialogue between FBOs/institutions and humanitarians and to emphasise the provisions of international humanitarian law, the need to build religious literacy, to change mind sets, prove the impact of FBOs/institutions, build communities at the local level; make better use of assets and premises of FBOs/institutions, keep a record of good practices, and, post-conflict, help people to return to normal lives, by contributing to reconstruction and reconciliation.

### *Proposals for Action, following the Symposium*

- *Establish new approaches for cooperation between faith-based actors:*
  - start **discussions with religious leaders** on the convergence of **shared values**;
  - **set up a Charter for humanitarian action** by FBOs/institutions;
  - agree a '**multi-faith compact**' to reaffirm humanitarian principles (including Common Articles 1 and 3 of 1949 Geneva Conventions);
  - religious leaders and FBOs/institutions to promote and **defend religious freedom**;
  - set up FBOs/institutions **networks at regional level**;
  - explore alternative **funding sources** from religious practices;
  - promote **religious literacy**.
- *Empower local communities, including religious communities, FBOs/institutions and affected people:*
  - set up centres to **share good practices**;
  - provide more **direct funding** to FBOs/institutions;
  - start **dialogue on local and regional peace processes**;
  - **involve the young and women** from different communities in humanitarian relief.
- *Create coherent approach and action between FBOs/institutions and humanitarian aid:*
  - establish a common FBOs/institutions **consultation with affected communities**;
  - set up risk analysis at regional level of a particular crisis to **assess how to use FBOs/institutions experiences** effectively;
  - **strengthen communication mechanisms**.

### **3. The process**

Attended by over 400 participants, the Symposium was organised around two high level panels, each with five members. Both panelists and participants represented a wide range of religious, political and humanitarian actors. Each panelist made a short contribution which was followed by questions that were expanded upon by the moderator.

The first panel examined the topic: *Present challenges for faith-based institutions*. It considered the characteristics of faith-based institutions, the challenge of respecting fundamental humanitarian principles, the specific contribution to humanitarian action (this includes humanitarian assistance and protection) by FBOs/institutions, the debate on religion



as the cause of conflict and religion as a tool for engaging with and protecting civilians and humanitarian workers.

The second panel: *Preparing for the future. How can faith-based institutions better assist and protect civilian populations in times of conflict?* discussed the way ahead. It examined the questions of what contribution religion can make to gaining the trust of populations and conflict parties, increasing respect for fundamental rules and principles, and the better promotion of reconciliation and the building of resilience. It also considered the question of how the international community can better understand and support the role of faith-based institutions in humanitarian action.

After the welcome by the Order's Permanent Observer to the United Nations Office, Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann, the UNOG Director-General, Under-Secretary General Michael Møller was invited to open the Symposium. His address was followed by introductory remarks by the Diplomatic Adviser to the Grand Chancellor of the Sovereign Order of Malta, Ambassador Stefano Ronca, and a keynote speech by the Order's Grand Chancellor, Albrecht Boeselager. The high level panelists each presented their contribution, and the panel discussion which followed was open to all 400 participants. The Symposium was brought to a close by the Order's Grand Hospitaller, Dominique de La Rochefoucauld-Montbel.



#### **4. Roundup of contributions and discussions**

The contributions and discussions are briefly outlined below. These points reflect general lines of thinking and do not provide a comprehensive reproduction of proceedings. A full account of the speeches, comments and questions are, as far as they were available, presented in the Annexes.

**a. Welcome: Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann, Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to UNOG**

- Ambassador Pictet expressed the Order of Malta's gratitude to UNOG and the WHS Secretariat for their full support and cooperation and to all participants, in particular the members of the two panels, for their contributions.
- Discussions will be reflected in a report to be submitted to the WHS Secretariat for further consideration by the Global Consultations to be held in Geneva from 14 to 16 October 2015.

**b. Opening: Under-Secretary General Michael Møller, Director-General, UNOG**

- Humanitarianism struggles today and religious beliefs are often challenged. These two phenomena often coincide.
- There is a need for an inclusive approach, as humanitarian challenges are reaching an apocalyptic scale. All available resources need to be put at the disposal of humanitarian action. Inclusiveness brings the challenge of coordination – hence the need for thorough preparation for the WHS.
- The role of FBOs/institutions is important in humanitarian action. Money is not the most valuable contribution of FBOs/institutions. Humanitarians risk their lives to help others, and their faith provides an impetus to help others.
- Faith need not be religious, although it often is. Humanitarian aid based on religious beliefs can generate ties and trust with host communities. FBOs/institutions often stay longer in areas where humanitarian action is needed – therefore the work of FBOs/institutions in building resilience is essential. Beliefs are a powerful tool, and religion can be used to mobilise people.
- Humanitarian principles are of the utmost importance in humanitarian action. FBOs/institutions need to ensure they provide aid to all regardless of their background and without the desire to influence their beliefs.
- There is a need to create platforms for interactions between FBOs/institutions.

**c. Introduction: Ambassador Stefano Ronca, Diplomatic Adviser to the Grand Chancellor of the Sovereign Order of Malta**

- The Symposium is set inside a much larger exercise – the World Humanitarian Summit.
- Needs are growing in scale in a fast-changing environment. Serving the needs of people in conflict is the concern of greatest interest to this Symposium.
- A hundred years ago, 90% of war victims were military. Today 90% of deaths are civilian.
- The United States DoS has recently established the Office of Religion to advise the Secretary of State on Foreign policy matters related to religion. With 84% of the world's population identifying itself with a particular faith, it is no wonder that governments are taking this powerful force in global politics and civil society seriously.

- As active members of civil society, FBOs/institutions can liberate significant physical and social assets for those in need. The UNHCR has always found the work carried out by FBOs/institutions to be invaluable. FBOs/institutions are widely present in every country and area of conflict due to their vast network. FBOs/institutions do not necessarily depend on international funding.
  - Religious actors engage in reconciliation and peace-building activities, improve conditions of prisoners, and support refugees. However, religion can also be a source of conflict. This happens when antagonism and exclusion are expressed towards others of different faiths, or when people witness practices that are harmful. It is important not to ignore the perversion of religion.
- d. Keynote Address: Albrecht Boeselager, Grand Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sovereign Order of Malta**
- 180 million people worldwide are affected by conflict today, the highest number since World War II. Often the world does not understand the complex causes of conflict. The proliferation of crises today is extraordinary – creating unprecedented demands on humanitarian actors. Conflict will continue to be part of our world and will continue to affect humanitarian action. Hence the need to find new tools and instruments. Humanitarian work has become a major part of the work of the Sovereign Order of Malta.
  - The achievement of a codified set of humanitarian principles after World War II is in danger of becoming a dead letter. The world must not accept this development.
  - The initiative of the UN Secretary General to convene the WHS is most welcome. The question of how to shape the unique contribution of FBOs/institutions needs to be explored. There is a need to combine the dimensions of religion, conflict and humanitarian action and to make objective assessments. To get a better grasp of how the relationship between religion and humanitarian action can be improved, an honest assessment of the role of FBOs/institutions in conflict, their role in the provision of aid, and the general role of humanitarian action, including secular organisations in conflicts, is needed.
  - Conflicts may contain religious elements, but they are more driven by cultural, ethnic and territorial factors, together with factors such as the actions of external powers. The answer to conflict might be more religion, or more specifically, the pursuit of religious non-violence, social tolerance, humanitarian commitment and peace-building.
  - Humanitarian action itself is contested in the same way as religion. The question of whether humanitarian aid prolongs conflict is sometimes raised in the same breath as the question of whether religion causes conflict. Therefore, the approach to humanitarian aid in conflict should be parallel to that towards religion in conflict. It always needs to be coupled with an acute awareness of its potential positive and negative effects.
  - Religious actors have a special power through their religious convictions above and beyond secular motivations. Their strength does not stop at the operational level, because they provide for the spiritual dimension of those in need.
  - Faith-based action is rightly challenged when it excludes those who are different, puts pressure on people to convert, or when it stigmatises others. Religious actors must do everything possible to lead by example and ensure that faith-based action does not undermine impartiality.



- Religious actors are well positioned to develop their approach and adapt to a changing world. Steps forward need to include the positive role of reconciliation, and the shared conviction that religion is a source of value. FBOs/institutions are well placed to interact with religious infrastructure, which is crucial for the promotion of peace and humanitarian action.

## **5. 1<sup>st</sup> panel: Present challenges for faith-based institutions: Religions and humanity in times of conflict and crisis**

*Moderator: Oliver McTernan, Co-founder and Director of 'Forward Thinking'*

### **a. Dr Jemilah Mahmood, Chief of the WHS Secretariat**

- There were 11 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in 2014, with one person being displaced every three seconds. This was a 15% increase from the previous year. Many communities rally around faith in disasters and conflicts. FBOs/institutions are already part of the international architecture of the humanitarian system, however, that system still fails to fully leverage the potential of FBOs/institutions at local and national level.
- Challenges for FBOs/institutions with regard to humanitarian action are:
  - 1) Proving the impact of FBOs/institutions. There is still a lack of data to support anecdotal evidence.
  - 2) The lack of trust, with many faith-based communities divided among themselves. Dialogue is the foundation of trust. It is important to find common ground, for example by linking humanitarian principles to faith values.
  - 3) The need to change mind-sets: namely the operation of aid as charity needs to change. Humanitarian action should be about solidarity grounded in humanitarian principles.
  - 4) The need for clear implementation to improve partnerships, because no one can operate alone today.
- Regarding the perception of bias toward FBOs/institutions: bias is inherent to human nature and also a part of secular organisations. Bias exists at all levels, national, local and community levels. There is a need for transparency and dialogue to overcome bias.

### **b. Franco Frattini, President of the Italian Society for International Organization & Former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs**

- The spiritual dimension is important today in the context of diplomacy and international relations because it is needed in order to bring humans back to being the centre of today's world. There is a need to counteract the instrumentalisation of religion. Spirituality in foreign relations is necessary to condemn killings in the name of God. There is a need for cooperation between religious leaders and to address issues of poverty.
- There are risks of old models being repeated: that is, of poor recipients and rich donors. There was a heritage of post-colonial approach, which was linked with expanding democracy and tying rules with aid. These paradigms need to be dismantled.
- It is necessary to multiply efforts to counteract instrumentalisation of religion for conflict. If religion is mobilised, it has to be independent enough to ensure that it acts for the good of victims, for example for victims of poverty, and not for other interests.

- President Frattini mentioned the example of Syrian refugees. He asked how to address the issue if the European Union decides to distribute 24,000 refugees in 2 years, but there are 2 million refugees from Syria. He stated that with small concrete local action, FBOs/institutions could reach the hearts and minds of people and go straight to the root causes of issues.
- c. Dr Hani El-Banna, Co-founder of Islamic Relief & of Muslim Charities Forum**
- Religion is the lifeline of every human on earth and it can be used as a tool to serve the community as well as to please God. FBOs/institutions should create their own values after working together.
  - Challenge of working in an atmosphere of xenophobia and Islamophobia.
  - Donors and governments sometimes suspect FBOs/institutions of being terrorist organisations and creating an atmosphere in which it is very difficult to work.
  - Need to look beyond the Summit and to build community at the local level.
  - The renewal of religion is another challenge. In building institutions to protect the community, there is a need to work hard to build local civil society and to build the community itself.
  - In some areas, for example in Afghanistan, it may matter that the agency distributing aid is of the same religion as the people they are helping, but a lot of non-Muslim organisations can also do the same if they observe local values and cultures.
- d. Min. Plen. Giampaolo Cantini, Director General of the Directorate for Development Cooperation (Italian MFA)**
- FBOs/institutions have the notable advantage of proximity to local communities. They are fundamental partners.
  - In many cases of humanitarian action, a vacuum is left in terms of social services, and FBOs/institutions may play an active role in filling that. In emergencies FBOs/institutions should focus their attention on the protection of vulnerable groups such as the elderly and the disabled.
  - Humanitarian principles are fundamental to safeguard the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to protect humanitarian workers.
  - There are challenges related to counter-terrorism legislation. Mediation led by FBOs/institutions can deliver added value in the quest for peace, security and reconciliation. They can also have a role in tackling root causes of extremism, especially by supporting young generations at risk of enrolment in terrorist organisations. It is important to involve religious leaders in this process.
  - Humanitarian aid should improve coordination with development agencies to engage in a fight against discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds.
  - The issue of humanitarian access should be one of the cornerstones of the WHS.
  - To meet humanitarian needs, there is a need for cooperation from the private sector, a broad coalition of FBOs/institutions and secular organisations.
- e. Rabbi Marc Raphaël Guedj, Director of Racines et Sources Foundation**
- The issues of the value added by FBOs/institutions and that of the danger of FBOs/institutions being sources of proselytism are strongly linked. If FBOs/institutions

are only on the ground on behalf of their religion then there could be a danger of proselytism.

- However if religion is used to find spirituality, FBOs/institutions have a universal wisdom linking us to others that enables us to find in each human being a unique dimension. If wisdoms and different spiritualities respect others then FBOs/institutions will not act out of proselytism. FBOs will add value, in a spiritual way too. Religions need to work together.
- FBOs/institutions should offer training sessions for actors so that the religious dimension they are conveying can be first linked to wisdom and humanity.
- Religious actors have to pursue dialogue in daily life. He shared the example of how he had discussions with Palestinian taxi drivers. In each moment of life, dialogue must take place, and not only in limited academic discussions.

**f. *Questions and comments from the floor and panelists' responses (Panel 1)***

After the contributions of the panelists, the floor was opened to comments and questions. These are reproduced below, in the order in which they were made.

*Questions and comments from the floor Part 1*

The Representative of *Egypt* noted that one of the basic principles of humanitarian action is universality and neutrality, without regard to geographical location, race or religion. Egypt was perplexed by the narrative of applying a religious approach to humanitarian action since in many conflicts today there is a 'religionisation' of political aspirations. The question is how to solve the problems of such conflict by further religionisation rather than 'de-religionisation'? Humanitarian actors should maintain a universal approach to humanitarian action without 're-religionisation'.

The *Arab Commission for Human Rights* raised the issue of NGOs and human rights. How to find synergies between humanitarian and human rights actors around universal values? Was it by trying to have meetings? The Arab Commission for Human Rights also asked about development issues. Too often, humanitarian actors do not talk about development issues whereas NGOs work in development. How to promote synergies with actors working in development?

*Responses from Panelists Part 1*

*Dr. El-Banna* replied that religion is core cross-cutting in many societies and that religious leaders control many societies. In all religions there are good principles that need to be applied, as well as commonly shared humanitarian values. Certain areas are controlled by religious groups. To deal with this issue is a reality of life.

*President Frattini* stated that spiritual values are at the basis of religions and these values lead to the centrality of human beings. He called for a value-based approach rather than a clerical approach. This approach could be pursued by FBOs/institutions.

*Questions and Comments from the Floor Part 2*

The Representative of *Lebanon* shared the experience that in Lebanon cooperation between FBOs/institutions is a seed that leads to peace. Lebanon cited the example of a Shia woman working with the Order of Malta and wearing the cross of the Order of Malta. The influx of

Syrian refugees into Lebanon has been a significant challenge which FBOs/institutions in her country have been mobilised to face. Hundreds of FBOs/institutions belonging to all religions are active. These organisations work with the spirit of neutrality and impartiality as the basis of their action. They are also creating a safe and peaceful context in which to defuse tensions.

The Representative of *Poland* recognised the role of FBOs/institutions in international humanitarian response. Poland stated that FBOs/institutions might deter violence through their presence, and by engaging in reconciliation and peace building. FBOs can mobilise and channel financing. Poland reiterated the importance of maintaining the development of partnerships between humanitarian agencies and FBOs/institutions based on humanitarian principles. Poland noted that the main advantage and challenge of the preparation process for the World Humanitarian Summit is its multi-stakeholder character. Poland also stated that there was room for FBOs/institutions elsewhere: for example in the new Disaster Risk Reduction framework.

The Representative of *Romania* stated that FBOs/institutions play an important role in conflict and post-conflict environments. Romania asked how FBOs/institutions might act in areas where religious values are not shared by the population and if there are examples of good practices.

The Representative of *Austria* stated that the ‘added value’ of FBOs/institutions was in the late stage of the conflict cycle: between cessation of hostilities, final stability and reconciliation. This is because FBOs/institutions can deliver the strength to forgive, show mercy and embrace former adversaries. On the issue of the possible bias of FBOs/institutions, Austria stated that a strict application of the principle of neutrality was necessary in order to counter this problem. Austria raised the issue of FBOs/institutions’ shared values and asked how to get to the stage of unpacking these values to bring organisations together.

The member of the *Hungarian Association of the Sovereign Order of Malta* stated that at grassroots level, an enormous amount of good work has been done by FBOs/institutions, with much cooperation on the frontlines. The problem is to give visibility to the role and work of FBOs/institutions at the global policy level and the dialogue level. More visibility is given to secular organisations and to the negative side of religious organisations and religion. This impinges on the funding of FBOs/institutions and their implementation of projects. It also creates a vicious circle whereby both secular and religious organisations see each other in a negative light. She asked how better to implement and illustrate the work of FBOs/institutions in a positive light at the policy level.

#### *Responses from the Panelists Part 2*

*Rabbi Guedj* asked how to counter the potential desire of secular organisations to marginalise FBOs. He stated that atheism came to purify faith and washed it away from superstition. There is a need for faith to be visible even to those who do not believe. Instead of defending themselves, FBOs/institutions need to grow. He also stated that giving permission for FBOs/institutions to grow means suggesting wisdom, a deeper humanity, and to see a part of the divine on everyone’s face.

*Dr El-Banna* stated that there is a need for FBOs/institutions to consult both sides when different religions are involved, for example in the North and South Sudan conflict zones. He noted that many Muslim organisations are helping effectively in various areas and highlighted the role of mosques and temples in humanitarian responses. He noted that there are many humanitarian organisations, but there are more mosques and churches. Dr.El-Banna mentioned the example of the Pakistan earthquake where the first responders were religious institutions.

#### *Questions and Comments from the Floor Part 3*

The *EU Core Network*: as a network of Christian relief organisations, it shared its experience of building the capacity of churches to respond in disaster.

*Cornelio Sommaruga*, former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), stated that action is not simply humanitarian assistance but also includes the protection of victims. ‘Religions together’ means a coordinated approach where religions are able to achieve the same humanitarian goal through a variety of FBOs/institutions. A prerequisite to a coordinated approach is that religions need to agree on certain fundamental parameters. Convergence between religions and FBOs/institutions is necessary for success in humanitarian action.

The Representative of *Poland* stated that religious beliefs should be considered as a part of identity and that human beings should be respected

#### *Responses from the Panelists Part 3*

*President Frattini* emphasised the importance of communication from the field, and noted that communication is an essential component in humanitarian assistance.

#### *Questions and Comments from the Floor Part 4*

The *Permanent Representative of the Anglican Communion to the UN, the Revd Canon Flora Wnfield DD*, stated that communities of faith could be partners to humanitarian actors. The international humanitarian community should work to ensure that everyone feels content and to enable joint enterprise. The international humanitarian community bears responsibility to local religious communities. Local communities are sometimes undermined by the presence of large organisations.

*Julian Theseira*, Intern of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Sovereign Order of Malta in Geneva, asked what is the role of FBOs/institutions in theological dialogue and conversations, and how to handle people holding values widely considered to be repugnant but who believe that their religion truly condones extreme practices?

#### *Responses from the Panelists Part 4*

*Rabbi Guedj* responded that each of our religions is responsible for our extremists. Very often we denounce the manipulation of religion by politics and thus we feel innocent of the acts of extremists. However, we are often happy to be manipulated. The perverse alliance of religion and politics is actually often for the interests of both religion and politics. A critical approach by each religion is therefore necessary. There are extremists in every religion. We cannot

change religious and sacred texts but we can see to it that these texts are interpreted in a humane way.

*Dr El-Banna* responded that it was the politicisation of state religious institutions that led people to give fatwas out to youngsters. Issues like the level of unemployment for young people are important factors in their response to such fatwas. The politicisation of state religious institutions is problematic.

**g. Lebanese Association of the Sovereign Order of Malta - Experience sharing**

Mr McTernan then raised the issue of potential difficulties faced in Lebanon, considering its diversity of beliefs, and invited the Lebanese Association of the Sovereign Order of Malta to share its experience.

*Ms Oumayma Farah Rizk*, the Representative of the Lebanese Association of the Sovereign Order of Malta, explained that Lebanon is a mosaic of 19 different religious communities and it represents a message to the world. Lebanese identify themselves by religion first. The Sovereign Order of Malta's 28 projects in Lebanon reach both Muslims and Christians and target the most underprivileged. The presence of the Sovereign Order of Malta gave strength and confidence to people to stay in their villages and has created trust and respect for the Order among all in Lebanon.

Ms Rizk explained how the Sovereign Order of Malta launched a mobile medical unit in Lebanon. This was achieved partly in collaboration with the Imam Al-Sadr Foundation. She also reported how the Order has cooperations and relationships with the supreme Shia Council of Lebanon, the Druze in Lebanon and the highest Sunni authority. When working at the local level, nothing is impossible. The long-term collaboration of the Lebanese Association of the Sovereign Order of Malta with all communities proves that when religions work together they can promote social justice and break down walls.

***Wrap up of the first panel by the moderator***

*Mr McTernan* wrapped up the first panel. He noted that there were a lot of good suggestions in terms of ideas, but not necessarily many concrete proposals. He mentioned the importance of communication, because FBOs/institutions have a duty to explain why they do what they do. FBOs/institutions live with an inherited bias against religion based humanitarian action because humanitarian aid has been used for proselytizing. The idea of creating a network of good practice for FBOs/institutions is therefore a practical and central matter. Mr McTernan also raised the need to develop a code of practice – for example in the fields of mediation and conflict resolution – as the main organisations have realised that there are no standards. Organisations are now beginning to come together to share how to develop standards and these also need to be communicated in religious responses. He noted that mutual engagement leads to enrichment. Mr McTernan emphasised the importance of investing in local capacity. Local religious institutions have knowledge and capacity which should be invested in. He reiterated the importance of religious literacy because religion can be used both as an instrument of conflict and as conflict resolution.



#### **h. Video interview with Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

*After the break a video interview with Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was shown. He was interviewed by Professor Michel Veuthey, Deputy Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to UNOG. The major points of the interview are reproduced here.*

On the role for FBOs/institutions in humanitarian action, President Maurer responded that the ICRC sees FBOs/institutions as responding to the basic needs of people. This is the core that drives humanitarian organisations. The founder of the ICRC, Henry Dunant, was a man of faith. He understood that neutrality and impartiality were needed for humanitarian action. It is important that FBOs/institutions respect the principles of neutrality and impartiality. Faith is a great source of humanitarian action.

On International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and FBOs/institutions, President Maurer said that FBOs/institutions are important, as is a commitment to a rules based society. The commitment of FBOs/institutions to IHL is critical to ensure respect for laws in practical life. FBOs/institutions and religious leaders can open doors for actors like the ICRC, and can ensure that the ideals enshrined in the Geneva Conventions are respected and taken seriously by armed groups in conflict. Everything enshrined in the Geneva Conventions as law has a role.

On how to improve cooperation between the ICRC and FBOs/institutions, President Maurer responded that it is important for the ICRC to have partners in the field with whom it shares values. The ICRC and its partners can only respond adequately if they have a close understanding. It is dangerous when faith and religion become elements of identity exclusion, such as when FBOs/institutions organise activities according to brethren in faith rather than according to human needs.

#### **6. 2<sup>nd</sup> panel: Preparing for the future. How can faith-based institutions better assist and protect civilian populations in times of conflict**

*Moderator: Alberto Negri, Journalist with Il Sole 24 Ore, Special Correspondent in the Middle East*

##### **a. Professor Alexander Aleinikoff, UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner**

- Raised the issue of conflict prevention and stated that it would be wonderful if there were no displaced people in the world. There is a need to build tolerance and the role of FBOs/institutions is important in regard to this issue.
- After a crisis happens, people flee from their homes and across borders. FBOs/institutions have worked closely with the UNHCR to provide relief and important services to these people.
- FBOs/institutions have strong links on the ground and they are trusted to meet the needs of people. There is a need to help people recover normal life after they have been displaced. Since religion is a part of many people's lives, FBOs/institutions can help restore this part of life. FBOs/institutions can combat xenophobia and have an important role in the transition to normal life for displaced people.

- Reported that High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres has stated that for the vast majority of uprooted people, there are few things as powerful as faith as a source of hope. Faith is a key to help rebuild lives. This is a particular role for FBOs/institutions which goes beyond what other NGOs can do and FBOs/institutions can play a stronger role in helping people return to normal lives.
- The US resettles refugees with the help of FBOs/institutions, and the US Resettlement Model may provide an example illustrating the role of FBOs/institutions in helping displaced people. The programme allocates refugees around the USA and can be adopted elsewhere, such as in Europe, and provide a role for FBOs/institutions.

**b. Ambassador Slimane Chikh, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to UNOG**

- The OIC is totally committed to the preparations for the WHS. The OIC and its member states manage crises and the OIC is sought after to provide humanitarian response in many locations. Since no adequate response can be provided in so many conflict areas without collaboration, the OIC tries to join efforts with the international community. The OIC tries to pool resources in humanitarian responses.
- The OIC is a political organisation, not an FBO/institution. Humanitarian action has to be combined with political action, and with peaceful conflict resolution and development aid. The OIC is based on two essential values: respect for human life and dignity. Through collective engagement and humanitarian action, intercultural dialogue and dialogue between civilisations will be reached.
- In terms of inclusion, the OIC does not limit its action to Muslim victims. Reference to religion has enabled the solution of some conflicts and has enabled FBOs/institutions to make a unique contribution to humanitarian action. Humanitarian actors are brothers to victims.

**c. Archbishop Mons. Silvano Tomasi, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to UNOG**

- In the Catholic Christian tradition there is outreach to people in need. There are two tracks on which to move forward on assistance in emergencies. The first is the track of inspiration or motivation. That comes from religious belief. The second is the track of actual delivery of service.
- The presence of communities embodies a culture of service. The inspiration for these communities comes from the Gospel, particularly the commandment to love God and neighbour. The love of neighbour pushes people to have solidarity with others. The argument comes from religious belief, but is based on the common origin of human beings. The inspiration is given both by religious motivation and basic solidarity generated by common human nature and equality as human beings. This common origin, nature and destiny of humanity should bind the human family together.
- There was a constant example of Christians in history demonstrating common solidarity with others. FBOs/institutions need to respond to new situations in the world.
- The role of Christian communities in responding to needs today is very concrete. There are very many examples of Christian FBOs/institutions' responses to need. Statistics illustrating the educational, health and social services provided by the Catholic Church

around the world are impressive. There is a very serious and articulated Christian commitment in responding to emergencies.

**d. Professor Michel Veuthey, Deputy Permanent Observer of the Order of Malta to UNOG, Vice President of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law**

- Dialogue between humanitarians and FBOs is essential to put an end to violations of standards protecting human life and dignity in today's conflicts.
- It is necessary to reaffirm universal values on the protection of human life and dignity of human beings in an universal ethic applicable in all circumstances, in all civilisations.
- Indeed, the foundations of IHL can be found in all civilisations. The goal of IHL is to ensure the survival of tribes, nations, civilisations. Today, what is at stake in the respect for IHL is humankind's survival.
- In most parts of the world, religious values are the unique moral references to defend human life and dignity.
- When governments challenge norms of positive law, religious leaders often are the only ones to defend them as moral values. For example the norms of positive law defining torture.
- The most universal wording of humanitarian principles is the *Golden Rule* ("One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself" or "one should *not* treat others in ways that one would *not* like to be treated").
- Religious leaders and legal experts should reaffirm fundamental provisions of IHL such as Common Articles 1 and 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions: Article 1 highlights the collective and individual responsibilities of States to "respect and ensure respect" for IHL "in all circumstances". Common Article 3 contains "essential considerations of humanity" applicable in all conflicts. The respect of humanitarian standards does not contradict but instead contributes to the domestic and international security of States.
- It is important to keep a record of good practices of FBOs, such as 'Truth and Reconciliation Commissions'. Indeed, after conflicts, criminal justice is not enough and there is a need for restorative justice and reconciliation as well.
- On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN Charter, there is a need to reaffirm international co-operation both in words and actions, to build bridges across civilisations that show our common humanity. Pope John Paul II had remarked that international law was for a long time a law of war and peace, but it should become exclusively a law of peace, conceived in justice and solidarity. Morality must lead to law and thus contribute to common good and to the survival of humankind.

**e. Swami Amarananda, Director of the Vedantic Centre in Geneva, representing the Order of Ramakrishna**

- The Order of Ramakrishna is dedicated to helping all. An example is the response to the January 1964 massacre of Hindus in Bangladesh and the massacre of Muslims in Kolkata in retaliation. The Order of Ramakrishna strives to maintain equi-distance from politics everywhere; it believes that the education of girls is important and also advocates for reconciliation – especially in the 205 native districts of India hit by terrorist activities.
- For the future of humanitarian action, actors in the name of religion should be conversant with the major themes of other religions, otherwise they cannot act properly. Religious

actors should accept different religions. Mystics across religions have access to eternal bliss and peace. There is a need not just to give emphasis to dogmas.

- Both science and religion should make efforts to validate beliefs. Swami Vivekananda, one of the founding figures of the Ramakrishna Order, said: “If we treat religions like science, many truths will be shattered, but other jewels of truth will shine brighter.”
- Faith is something that is accepted, but there is doubt. True faith must come with tremendous conviction, and this comes with the experience of mystics. Henry Dunant’s life is a parallel with Ashoka’s, as both were transformed by experiences on the battlefield.
- Organisations that have faith should do much better than others.

The moderator *Antonio Negri* then commented in response to the panelists’ statements. He noted that the spiritual and mystical aspects of religions were highlighted. He stressed that there are many different political agendas regarding religion. He also highlighted that religion at this moment is subject to politics. Religion is not driving the situation, but rather political gains are driving the situation.

#### **f. *Questions and Comments from the Floor and panelists’ responses (Panel 2)***

##### *Questions and Comments from the floor Part 1*

The President of *Voice International* stated that the central topic was that the WHS was called by the UN Secretary-General because of systemic problems in humanitarian action, and that it has been set up to pave the way for a later conference that will encompass intergovernmental decisions. He said that he had not heard anything he could disagree with, but was expecting to hear from representatives of different religions about what needs to be upheld in view of the WHS. He noted that everyone in the room was in favour of upholding fundamental humanitarian principles, but highlighted that some are against these principles. If these values should be upheld then it should be said loudly. He stated that one thing that needed to be changed was the sense of relative danger and menace towards some aspects of humanitarian action behind the scenes.

The Representative of *Finland* thanked the Sovereign Order of Malta for the organisation of the Symposium. Finland reiterated that humanity, saving people’s lives, and protecting human dignity are universal principles and that religious leaders and FBOs/institutions are often first responders and are also important actors in resilience and peacebuilding.

The Representative of the *International Organization for Migration (IOM)* thanked the organisers of the Symposium. IOM appreciated the longstanding relationship between itself and the Sovereign Order of Malta. IOM was pleased to hear that everyone agrees FBOs/institutions can make a contribution to humanitarian action. IOM noted that people affected by crises often experience loss of their material means of survival and are affected in spirit as well. IOM asked whether FBOs/institutions are better placed than other actors to respond to ailments of the spirit in the broadest sense of the term.

### *Responses from the Panelists Part 1*

Professor *Aleinikoff* stated that FBOs/institutions should continue to adhere to humanitarian principles and reiterated that FBOs/institutions are better placed to meet spiritual needs.

Ambassador *Chikh* stated that the last stage of crisis resolution is conflict resolution. All psychological issues must be addressed at that stage. Psychological issues are a dimension that should not be neglected.

Professor *Veuthey* stated that if the main humanitarian principles of the ICRC are seen as elements of secular western humanitarian religion, then they are doomed. If, however, it can be explained that they are fundamental principles for all humankind then they will be saved.

*Swami Amarananda* concurred with other panelists regarding the question on upholding humanitarian principles. He raised the issue of how to address damage to the spirit and noted that those who espouse religion meditate a great deal and become leaders.

The moderator Antonio Negri then concluded that there is a need for good values and good practice for humanitarian action. When humanitarian organisations deliver international aid, they not only deliver aid, but also a culture. He concluded by saying that humanitarian action should be more than material and it should include a spiritual sensitivity.

#### **g. Conclusions: Dominique de La Rochefoucauld-Montbel, Grand Hospitaller and Minister of Health and International Cooperation of the Sovereign Order of Malta**

- In the two years since the launch of the WHS process by the UN Secretary-General, the world has seen a continued development of conflicts. There is a need for partnerships to bring aid to populations in distress.
- The Sovereign Order of Malta organised the Symposium because the contributions of FBOs/institutions are vital. FBOs/institutions together could give voice to the most important concerns affecting humankind today. They can raise the issue that human rights are not available to all. FBOs/institutions can create the possibility of alleviating suffering by demonstrating the force of faith and respect for the dignity of man.
- The Symposium demonstrated the agreement of panelists to pursue goals together. The panelists made essential points that characterise FBOs/institutions and these provide a framework for working together effectively: namely the presence of FBOs/institutions on the ground, their common fundamental desire to see that human dignity is respected, their networks, the trust they enjoy from affected populations and their liaison between diasporas and affected people.
- Following the discussions of the Symposium proposals should be put forward to the WHS. There is a need for understanding and respect for human rights and IHL especially as applicable in armed conflicts. The rights of refugees must also be respected, because the world is experiencing the greatest displacement of people since 1945.
- Strong signposts have emerged from the Symposium. They include among others: finding new ways to unpack the values of FBOs/institutions, demonstrating a credible and honest understanding of humanitarian principles, better use of the assets and premises of faith-based institutions for humanitarian action, achieving a coordinated approach of all FBOs/institutions and most importantly, better recognition of the capacity of local

communities to ensure that the international humanitarian system does not ruin their future when it leaves.

- We also need to think about establishing rapid and practical inter-religious links: for instance by establishing liaison points in specific crises. Some of these issues do not only apply to faith-based institutions, but to secular organisations as well.
- We need to elaborate practical steps in two areas: firstly to work together and pool resources, and secondly, to create the strongest possible awareness of human rights.
- It is only by a constant effort of attention towards the evolution of the needs of assistance and protection that we can try to meet the challenges of the Good Samaritan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## 7. PROPOSALS AND POSSIBLE ACTION

### Proposals arising from the consultations

The aim of the Symposium was to raise awareness of the value that FBOs/institutions can provide in terms of humanitarian aid and conflict resolution, by bringing together a range of perspectives and religious representatives and re-establishing normal lives of afflicted populations.

What follows is a summary of the concrete points that emerged from the contributions by the high-level panelists and the plenary discussions, including contributions received by the Sovereign Order of Malta following the Symposium. This round-up is therefore a distillation of these contributions and does not necessarily directly reflect the interventions and statements made during the Symposium.

### Action points arising from the consultations

The key ideas and proposals that emerged from the Symposium cover three areas in which the faith-based community could improve the humanitarian system. They reflect the contributions made by some participants during and after the Symposium and contribute in general to our research and reflection.

Some practical and concrete ideas for the implementation of such improvements:

#### *1 Dialogue, communication and common understanding: Developing new approaches for cooperation between faith-based actors*

- Needed: a more sustained and enduring engagement to explore the benefits of faith-based actors and translate these benefits into practice. A common understanding of principles as well as new and honest ways to interpret and apply them should be integrated in this exploration.

Some practical action of this could be:

- Initiate a discussion with religious leaders on the convergence of shared religious values supporting the protection of human life and dignity, as well as fundamental humanitarian principles (humanity, neutrality, impartiality). Identifying ways to link religious principles to humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law (IHL); exploring topics which could form the basis of a Charter for humanitarian action by FBOs/institutions; showing real evidence for the advantages of FBOs/institutions by giving examples of good practice and defining policies: for example, collecting lessons learned on religious leaders' roles in supporting ceasefires and peace negotiations<sup>1</sup> which have created space for humanitarian assistance to reach affected populations.
- Agree on a 'multi-faith compact' between religious humanitarian actors as an opportunity to strengthen the humanitarian idea and to reaffirm humanitarian principles (particularly in situations of conflict and protracted crisis). This compact may include agreements to promote fundamental rules and principles of IHL and other values, in order to protect human life and dignity, lobby and advocate towards State and non-State actors for the rights of refugees, IDPs and other affected people,

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<sup>1</sup> Such as in South Sudan and Egypt

counteract the manipulation of religion for power and economic purposes, fight the stigma of politicised aid, etc.

- Establish a network of FBOs/institutions at regional level to exchange good practices in humanitarian aid, scale up dialogue activities, exchange of information, and improve inter-religious links on the ground - for example, through the creation of liaison points in specific crises.
- Highlight cooperation between different religions in emergencies and accentuate the inclusive rather than the exclusive side of religion. This would help to reinforce a positive and open self-image of FBOs/institutions, validate their values of transparency and inclusiveness and counteract exclusionist tendencies.
- Strengthen humanitarian diplomacy and make better use of FBOs/institutions' trust capital in specific areas - for example, provide support to international and regional policy initiatives, with the aim of negotiating better access to people in need, and facilitating relief and protection.
- Explore alternative sources for humanitarian financing that originate from religious practices such as Zakat from Islamic social financing, Zedakah from the Jewish traditions. Assess how the cooperation between faith institutions can also extend towards co-financing models.
- Identify supportive religious leaders in the realm of FBOs/institutions to promote peace and reconciliation in times of conflict. Wherever possible, integrate such reconciliation and peace-building elements into humanitarian programmes and aid initiatives. The role of religious leaders has often been overlooked and their potential is not yet fully realised.
- Promote religious literacy within the international humanitarian community for both secular and faith-based actors.
- Reaffirm the unique value of human life and dignity and the need to respect them in all circumstances. This should include the promotion of fundamental rules and principles of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts, especially Common Articles 1 and 3 to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, both recognized as customary law: Article 1 stipulates the individual and collective responsibility of all States to "respect and ensure respect" for the Conventions; Article 3 contains "essential considerations of humanity", applicable in all conflicts, similar to fundamental Human Rights, non-derogable in any situation.
- Promote and defend religious freedom. Religious leaders and faith-based institutions should play an active role on this issue.

*Power to local communities: Build capacity of local religious communities, FBOs/ institutions and affected people*

Local religious communities are groups of people bound through adherence to shared beliefs, history and identity. FBOs/institutions are institutions with a religious motivation or background and which are affiliated with a religion. Along with other local groups, they are among the first responders in a crisis or emergency. Capacity building should contribute to locally led and owned humanitarian response.

Potential action in this field might encompass:

- Establish training and knowledge centres to share good practice and build the capacity of ‘first responders’ in crises, particularly to improve access for people in need.
- Provide more direct funding to local FBOs/institutions, and commit to the target of a specific percentage of funding for local FBOs/institutions.
- Establish mechanisms to better integrate the voices of local religious communities into the decision processes of humanitarian aid, starting on a local or programme level.
- Start a dialogue on a local and regional level on how to support local and regional peace processes, change mindsets and listen more attentively.
- Encourage south-south, multi-faith, inter and intra-faith cooperation, dialogue and action on these issues.
- Explore the development of a cadre of regional and local religious leaders trained in International Humanitarian Law and principles in order to provide support in advocating for access to affected populations. This could be piloted in one or two countries (or one region of one or two countries). The process could draw on lessons learned from other contexts where religious leaders have been able to provide support on access dialogues, such as South Sudan.
- Explore how the moral force of religion (and spirituality) can be a motivator for aid workers of FBOs/institutions and a psycho-social tool to relieve stress.
- Consider the possible use of religious premises and assets such as mosques, churches, synagogues, temples and other sacred places as possible emergency facilities. Explore capacity building amongst local religious institutions in order to be able to respond to conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. This could be piloted in one or two countries.
- Involve young people in humanitarian relief and mobilise local youth from different communities as a best practice example for strengthening social cohesion and reconciling divided societies. FBOs/institutions have a comparative advantage in mobilising local youth.

*Bridge the gap: Create concerted FBO/institution action and a coherent approach to humanitarian assistance and development*

FBOs/institutions are, by their nature, usually multi-mandated institutions, that is, they are working in both the fields of humanitarian assistance (where the overriding priority is saving lives) and of development (which has dimensions that go far beyond saving lives and often comes with a politicised agenda). This is why the divide between humanitarian assistance and development is often challenging for FBOs/institutions. Secular stakeholders also face this challenge because the link between emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction cannot be ignored. At the same time, open dialogue between religious actors on how they can uphold humanitarian principles must take place continuously.

Practical implementation of concerted FBO/institution action and a coherent approach within this sphere could consist of measures such as:

- Initiate a common context and risk analysis of a particular crisis on a regional level to make best use of the variety of mandates and experiences amongst FBOs/institutions - with a focus on the social services rendered by FBOs/institutions and religious organisations.

- Establish a common FBOs/institutions consultation with the affected community so that relief programmes are based on community priorities and take into account both immediate and longer term local needs (“don’t leave them with nothing when you’re gone”), particularly those that can best be delivered by FBOs/institutions.
- Strengthen communication mechanisms and information sharing on common issues such as the Mediterranean refugee crisis and other crises in Africa and Asia.
- Use FBOs/institutions’ religious background in recovery activities and processes. Since religion is an integral part of the lives of many people, it can provide valuable help in restoring those lives following armed conflicts and natural disasters.
- Integrate premises and projects of ‘FBOs/institutions’ development and social sector’ into emergency response plans. A great many of the social services in developing countries are provided by FBOs/institutions and these could be well used for preparedness activities and resilience building.
- Together, to advocate for better policies to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development, particularly where the policies being adopted have strong negative implications for the affected population.

## **8. NEXT STEPS**

The Symposium brought together a range of opinions and ideas. Some of these are reflected in this section. The proposals and action points can be further developed and implemented. We would like to encourage humanitarian stakeholders, particularly FBOs/institutions, to take ownership of one or more of the initiatives.

Some action points will have to be piloted in the field to ensure suitability and applicability.

## 9. THE SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA

The Sovereign Order of Malta is a sovereign subject of international law with its own constitution. It has full bilateral diplomatic relations with 105 States and Representations to major European countries and organisations, as well as Permanent Observer Missions to the United Nations and its specialised agencies. The Sovereign Order of Malta is neutral, impartial and non-political, which is why it can successfully act as a mediator between states. Following its historic mission to help the sick, the needy and the most disadvantaged in society, the Sovereign Order of Malta continues its work today, operating in more than 120 countries. Its programmes include medical and social assistance, emergency services and first aid corps, help for the elderly, the handicapped and children in need, the provision of first aid training, and support for refugees and internally displaced persons regardless of race, origin or religion as well as disaster relief in the case of armed conflicts and natural catastrophes. The Sovereign Order of Malta has been operating with this impartial perspective for over 900 years, caring for people of all beliefs whoever they are and wherever they come from.

The Order relies on the involvement of its 13,500 members, 80,000 trained volunteers and over 25,000 health and administrative personnel. The Order's organisations worldwide (Grand Pries, National Associations, relief organisations and foundations) are responsible for carrying out its activities, both in its permanent institutions – such as hospitals, outpatient medical centres and old peoples' homes – and in its socio-medical and humanitarian programmes. Many of these actions are carried out by Malteser International, the Order's worldwide relief service. Malteser International provides emergency relief in conflicts and natural disasters and supports recovery efforts through rehabilitation and reconstruction projects.



## 10. THE PANELISTS

### PANEL 1



**Dr Jemilah Mahmood, Chief of the WHS Secretariat**



**Franco Frattini, President of the Italian Society for International Organization & Former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs**



**Dr Hani El-Banna, Co-founder of Islamic Relief & of Muslim Charities Forum (MCF)**



**Min. Plen. Giampaolo Cantini, Director General of the Directorate for Development Cooperation (Italian MFA)**



**Rabbi Marc Raphaël Guedj, Director of Racines et Sources Foundation**

### MODERATOR



**Oliver McTernan, Co-founder and Director of 'Forward Thinking'**

### PANEL 2

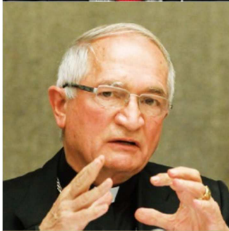




**Professor Alexander Aleinikoff, UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner**



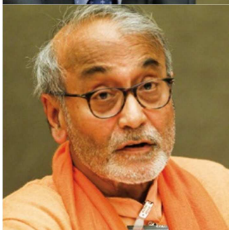
**Ambassador Slimane Chikh, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to UNOG**



**Archbishop Mons. Silvano Tomasi, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to UNOG**



**Professor Michel Veuthey, Deputy Permanent Observer of the Order of Malta to UNOG, Vice President of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law**



**Swami Amarananda, Director of the Vedantic Centre in Geneva, representing the Order of Ramakrishna**

#### **MODERATOR**



**Alberto Negri, Journalist, Il Sole 24 Ore, Special Correspondent in the Middle East**

## **11. ANNEXES: PANELISTS' STATEMENTS**

**AMBASSADOR MARIE-ThÉRÈSE PICTET-ALTHANN, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA TO UNOG**

Director General,

Honorable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and a special privilege to welcome you here this afternoon on behalf of the Sovereign Order of Malta represented by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Albrecht Freiherr von Böselager, and our Minister of Health and International Cooperation, H.E. Dominique Prince de La Rochefoucauld-Montbel, who will be addressing us shortly. I thank you all for your presence and also extend a warm welcome to the many members of the Order of Malta who have travelled to Geneva from around the world including Africa, Asia and South America.

Allow me at the outset to express my particular gratitude to the Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Michael Moller and his staff, for hosting this Symposium in the Palais des Nations and for the extensive support we have received for the organization of this event.

We are equally grateful to the secretariat of the World Humanitarian Summit for our excellent cooperation and in particular to the Chief of the secretariat, Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, for her advice and much appreciated participation to-day. It was Dr Mahmood who encouraged us to take this initiative, as she was very keen to see more faith-based institutions become involved in the ongoing preparatory process leading up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul.

I also wish to sincerely thank the members of our two panels who will share with us their valuable experiences and thoughts on a topic with multiple facets that needs to be analyzed and further explored so as to enable humanitarian action to benefit fully from the potential that faith-based organizations offer to populations suffering from armed conflicts.

Our discussions will be reflected in a report to be submitted to the secretariat of the WHS for further consideration by the Global Consultations to be held here in Geneva this October.

**AMBASSADOR STEFANO RONCA, DIPLOMATIC ADVISER TO THE GRAND CHANCELLOR, SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA**

Allow me to say a few words about today's Symposium and the context in which it takes place. The Symposium is set, in fact, within a much more extensive exercise: the World Humanitarian Summit.

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to be held in Istanbul in May 2016 will conclude a global consultation process, started by the Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon in 2012. Its purpose is to reshape the humanitarian system so it can efficiently address the growing humanitarian needs. Needs which are increasing in amplitude and variety within a fast changing global environment.

The Istanbul Symposium is focused on four themes: Humanitarian Effectiveness, Managing Risk and Reducing Vulnerability, Transformation through Innovation as well as Serving the Needs of People in Conflict. It is this last issue “serving the needs of people in conflict” that interests most our Symposium.

Millions of people are fleeing from wars and violence; nine deaths out of ten are civilians. A hundred years ago, 90% of war victims were military. Today 90% of deaths are civilian. Civilians are paying the price of human violence. Most victims are women and children. Refugees are dramatically increasing.

Today we will debate about religions and conflicts. The contribution of faith-based actors in areas of conflict and war. And the role of religions in promoting reconciliation and strengthening resilience.

The Symposium is divided into two High-Level Panel Discussions, each covering one topic:

- the first High-Level Panel will examine “Present Challenges for faith-based institutions: Religions and Humanity in times of Conflict and Crisis”
- the second High-Level Panel will deal with “Preparing for the future. How can faith-based institutions better assist and protect civilians”.

A central question is: do faith-based institutions have an added value ? We think they do.

But who else thinks the same? Is this opinion coming only from the Order of Malta or from some other religious institutions understandably fond of this idea? Not only.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – which with its Deputy High Commissioner will be one of today’s key speakers - is a secular organization. Nevertheless it has always found that the work carried out by faith-based institutions is invaluable. Why? Because “as active members of civil society, faith actors and their organizations can leverage significant social, physical and spiritual assets for the benefit of populations in need”.

The UNHCR has expressed this idea on several occasions. More specifically two years ago, following a two-day meeting with 400 FBOs. On that occasion the High Commissioner for Refugees emphasized the valuable contribution that faith-based institutions, organizations and communities make to protect refugees and displaced persons.

Faith actors - as reported in HCR documents - are widely present in every country and therefore also in areas of conflict due to their vast networks. Moreover their presence does not necessarily depend upon external or international funding. They often remain long after international attention has faded and funding has declined.

The good practices of religious actors are well known throughout the world. Religious actors provide protection, assistance and care; facilitate humanitarian access; deter violence through their presence, mediate tensions between refugees and host communities; engage in reconciliation and peace building activities; provide legal counselling and asylum management; improve the conditions of prisoners and finally support the integration of refugees in society.

We must also admit that although religion can be a fantastic multiplier of humanitarian assistance, it can also be a source of conflicts. This happens when antagonism or exclusion is expressed by religious actors towards members of another faith, when pressure is exerted to

convert, when we witness practices considered harmful by shared legal and ethical international standards. We should not deny or ignore the perversions that religions can take in the hands of men.

The values of religion, which are the key for reconciliation and peace, are too often manipulated for the pursuit of power and profit through violence.

This has happened multiple times over the centuries in the name of all religions.

And it continues today when religious texts are manipulated and extremists claim to find in them justifications to their criminal behaviour.

There is no doubt that religion, nowadays, has become a critical international issue. The United States Department of State, for example, has recently established the Office of Religion and Global Affairs to advise the Secretary of State on foreign policy matters related to religion. Such decision recognizes by the strong intersection between religion, global issues and foreign policy.

With 84% of the world's population identifying itself with a particular faith, it is no wonder that governments are taking this powerful force in global politics and civil society seriously.

It is not only this figure that justifies the increased attention given to faith-based actors in the humanitarian field. This attention is also warranted because of the dramatically expanding dynamics between religion, conflict and the repercussion this has on the humanitarian action.

I'm glad that we have the opportunity today to explore these dynamics in depth and I wish you a stimulating afternoon.

**ALBRECHT BOESELAGER, GRAND CHANCELLOR AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA**

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to add my welcome to that of Mrs Pictet-Althann to this symposium, which is meant as a contribution to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. My particular thanks to the Director General at the United Nations in Geneva Michael Møller and to the Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat Jemilah Mahmood for hosting this event. It is very encouraging to see so many representatives from both the religious and the humanitarian worlds, and the fact that many of you have travelled so far reminds us how important our work is.

As we gather here today, there are some 180 million people affected by conflict worldwide. We have not seen such a high number since the Second World War. Often we do not understand enough the complex causes of conflict. The proliferation of crises and needs is extraordinary as are the dramatic humanitarian consequences. The millions of people affected by a variety of very different major crises, place unique demands on all humanitarian actors. 80 million people worldwide depend on humanitarian assistance for their mere survival, the majority of them live in regions of conflict. It is sad but true that conflict will continue to harm millions of people, and will indeed become a normal scenario, in the next 10-15 years. Conflict will remain an increasingly important component of humanitarian assistance, and we need to be prepared for this and to look for new methods and instruments.

Allow me to take a moment to explain the source of the special concern that the Sovereign Order of Malta shares for people in conflict. As you may know, the Order was founded more than 900 years ago in the Holy Land as an institution to serve injured and sick pilgrims. Its mission was soon extended to care for all people in need with no distinction of race, religion, and ethnical origin. This mission is carried out today in about 120 countries. For more than 900 years, the Order has been recognised as an international sovereign entity, and although it lost control of its principal territory, the islands of Malta, it has retained its identity as an international sovereign body. Today, our headquarters in Rome is regarded as ‘extraterritorial’ by the surrounding state of Italy. We have formal diplomatic relations with 105 countries – many of which are non-Catholic - and we exchange ambassadors with these other states. The Order was also granted Permanent Observer status at the United Nations in 1994.

Today, I want to focus on the humanitarian work of the Order, which has become a major part of our activities over generations. Our commitment to the sick and the poor is absolutely impartial and neutral. Not only is the Order not aligned with any political block, our humanitarian programmes are administered regardless of religion or race. The Order’s humanitarian relief agency, Malteser International, is ensuring the health and dignity of millions of people around the globe by implementing over 100 projects.

With great concern, we observe a fast decreasing regard for humanitarian principles. The great achievements of the family of nations after the two World Wars in codifying humanitarian principles to be observed in wars and armed conflicts are in danger of becoming mere papers. The generation to come may only see them displayed in a museum and deplore the loss of high cultural achievements of a past civilisation. We must not accept this and must work together to find innovative ways to fight this tendency.

Against the background of this experience and in working with the poor and the sick who have become the innocent victims of conflict worldwide, the Order highly appreciates and welcomes the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to convene the World Humanitarian Summit.

Bringing together the global community in order to forge new partnerships and find better ways to meet humanitarian needs in the future, is nowadays absolutely mandatory.

In order to contribute and support this initiative, we are gathered here today to explore how faith-based institutions and humanitarian actors can better assist and protect civilians in times of conflict – and more specifically, what could be the distinguishing help of faith-based institutions. This exploration needs to combine an investigation of the dimensions of conflict, religion and humanitarian aid. Only by viewing these three dimensions in combination is it possible to make an objective assessment, and to draw good conclusions for our future work. To get a better grasp of how religious institutions and organisations can improve, we need to deal with the role of religion in conflict; be honest about both the positive and negative impact of humanitarian aid on situations of conflict; as well as explore the particular role that faith-based organisations play when they provide humanitarian aid in conflicts and elsewhere.

Wars have been fought in the name of different gods and goddesses since ancient times. Therefore, it is often suggested that since religion has been involved in all sorts of conflicts, it is at the core of these clashes. The current barbarities committed worldwide

by groups which refer to a religion for their justification - ISIS/Da-ish, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and the Christian anti-Balaka (CAR), to name a just few – and the longstanding regional conflicts in the Near and Middle East are prompting many people to ask if religion is the cause of most conflicts in the world. I think that it is far too simplistic to lay the blame on religion as the main source of conflict. The last century was full of examples of mass killing and wars, which needed no god. The picture of war is too complex to paint with just one colour, and when it comes to the role of religion, it is my firm belief that religion is misused as a source of influence to pursue the very secular interests of power. Religious motivations can induce violence when separated from moral content and poisoned by corruption and driven by power. Conflicts may contain religious elements. However, they are always driven by cultural, economic, ethnic, territorial and other factors such as external pressures. Maybe the answer to conflicts with a religious element is not less religion, but more; more of religion's peaceful, non-violent content as a rich source of reconciliation, social tolerance, devotion, humanitarian commitment, empowerment and peace-building.

Taking this up, it is both interesting and striking that humanitarian aid itself is often contested in the same way as religion. The equivalent to the question of whether religion causes war is: "Does humanitarian aid prolong conflict"? Everyone in the humanitarian world knows about the problems and negative effects of humanitarian aid. Conflict parties often manipulate aid for their own benefit; agencies create aid dependency; assistance is used as a substitute for political action; the issue of aid giving power to belligerents; and many other issues can influence the dynamics of conflict in terms of its duration and violence. However, here again the picture is incomplete. Humanitarians know about these challenges and are doing their best to mitigate the consequences. Standards, norms and principles have been put in place, and even if these measures are often overruled by reality, the humanitarians are rarely the most responsible for that. They choose to save lives where they can, and this is most important in those settings that are far from the ideal humanitarian world. Helping people has never been easy. Therefore, one should not contest humanitarian aid at every possible opportunity, but work to improve the humanitarian system in all its facets. This is the right thing to do. In this way, our approach to humanitarian aid in conflict should be similar to our approach to religion in conflict: Not less humanitarian aid, but more, is the answer; in the same way that not less religion, but more is needed, coupled always with an acute awareness of its positive and negative effects.

This leads me to the role of 'faith-based' or religion-based institutions and organisations in humanitarian aid. In dealing with the issues of conflict, humanitarianism and religion, the circle of themes for today's symposium becomes complete.

The question in this context is what makes us as religion-based actors distinct from secular actors. Do we do different things, or do we do the same things differently? Everybody now recognises that religion-based actors are a crucial part of the architecture of international humanitarian activity. The common perception is that this is true because religion-based actors and faith-based organisations have professionalised to the point of having no differences to secular actors.

However, I strongly believe that religious actors have a unique position through the power of their conviction; their reach; their motivation; and their longevity, over and above that of secular organisations. Assisting the poor is deeply rooted in the teachings



of religions. Further, I believe that the particular strengths of religion-based actors do not stop at the operational level. We never lose sight of the spiritual dimension of people in need. Our assistance responds not only to material demands, combining technical care with an ethical and spiritual dimension.

However, we should not conceal the challenges that are particular to some faith-based actors. Faith-based action is rightly challenged when faith actors exclude members of other faith backgrounds; proselytise and put pressure on people to convert as a pre-condition for support; or when they stigmatise and discriminate against individuals or groups of people. The inappropriate behavior of just one faith actor can discredit us all. We therefore must do everything we can to lead by example and to demonstrate that faith-based action does not undermine the principles of impartiality and neutrality, and that our spiritual vision is not in conflict with the impartial humanitarian imperative. We must be moved to act by faith, in an inclusive, not exclusive way.

I firmly believe that we are all well positioned to develop our approach and to adapt to the challenges of a changing world. Steps forward to improve the assistance of people in conflicts need to include: the better usage of the unique strengths of faith-based actors; the promotion of the positive role for reconciliation that religion can play through the unifying power of shared faith or the shared conviction that religion is the source of their values; the establishment of interreligious dialogue to learn about other religions and provide for a common understanding of our special humanitarian mandate. These elements, among others, are crucial to improve our position and enhance our effectiveness. Religion based actors are well placed to interact with the religious infrastructure in affected areas, which in most cases plays a crucial role in organising help and promoting peace.

In conclusion let me share with you two examples. After the terrible tsunami in 2005 we helped to rebuild villages in Aceh, Indonesia. When I visited the region the local Mullah while greeting me at the entrance of the village, remarked how satisfied he was for being helped by people who were honouring God. He then invited me to the newly built mosque to pray together. Him saying his Muslim prayer, myself my Christian prayer.

In Lebanon our Order runs ten socio-medical centres all over the county, some of them in close cooperation with other religions, with the Druse, the Sunnites and in the South with the Shiites. There, Shiite nurses wear our cross on their working dress. The cooperation in the humanitarian field of religious-based organisations plants seeds of peace and creates a bond of mutual trust and confidence among people of different religions.

I am very pleased that today we can embark on a journey of mutual discovery. I would like to thank you very much for your kind attention and I hope the symposium will be a great success.

**FRANCO FRATTINI, PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION & FORMER ITALIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Spiritual dimension, in the framework of today's "global disorder", can be considered as a powerful positive weapon to rebuild mutual trust and cooperation, so having a disruptive potential for pursuing peace, well far from the rhetoric of good feelings.

I would like to remind a great Pontiff, John Paul II, who in 1986, addressing the religious leaders gathered in Assisi, recalled: "The coming together of so many religious leaders to pray is in itself an invitation today to the world to become aware that there exists another dimension of peace and another way of promoting it which is not a result of negotiations, political compromises or economic bargaining."

From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has never ceased to promote and seek dialogue, at the same time recalling the sacrilegious nature of invocations to the Divinity only to justify or encourage crimes towards other men.

It is true that the diplomacy makes use of negotiations, compromises, sometimes of trade, but the search for consensus should not neglect those fundamental aspects of societies and cultures that represent the true and authentic opportunities for encounter and exchange between individuals and peoples. In this dimension, interreligious dialogue can become a toll for what can be defined as a strong preventive diplomacy. It is always necessary to prepare the ground for countries and societies being compared: this comparison can range from politics to the economy, however they remain only tools. The real goal diplomacy must never lose sight of, is the creation of the human being. That is the objective which must remain the centrepiece of the foreign policy of any country that wishes to define itself truly democratic.

There are cross-cutting themes such as the economy, politics, the current climate change, the issues of bioethics, the absolute value of human life from the moment of conception until death: these issues, which affect the lives of people, have a moral content and a spiritual dimension. Adding the spiritual dimension to the political and institutional actions implies enriching them through contents that otherwise they would not have, by respecting and reflecting on the need for "absolute" which is present in every man.

There is also another reason why the dimension of spirituality and religiosity is to be recovered in the context of international relations: that reason arises from the need to counteract the phenomena of instrumentalization of religion. Too many terrorists continue to strike in the name of God. The idea that religion can be a factor of conflict must be fought against, with the courage to call all religious leaders to declare that whoever kills another man in the name of God, is cursing the name of God and committing a sacrilege, as Pope Francis reaffirmed last September in Albania. It is clear that all this must be pursued with firmness and hardness, respecting the absolute principle that there are no negotiable values: you can't even discuss or examine the idea whether the respect for a particular religion could possibly lead to the justification of the use of violence. The verses of the Qu'ran, the Torah and the Gospels all teach that religions are the negotiation of conflict: addressing that issue, politics, institutions and civil society need to stay together. Otherwise, we really risk leaving room to the real enemies of peace and security, to those who – taking a cue from those killings – are pronouncing anathemas and threats against members of other religions and other civilizations. The dangerous assimilation of Islam to extremism and terrorism, made by some people, is the proof that we must eradicate from the deep the justificationism and the positions of those who claim that the Muslim is inherently prone to violence: once again, we need to work together against those wrong and erroneous positions.

In the international scenario I mentioned earlier, the peoples of the world a feeling a more intense need to reaffirm their cultural identities and to seek to become members of – and identify with – movements defined under rigid and exclusive criteria. The return, in many countries of the world, to traditional cultural customs, often in their most orthodox forms, seems to represent a shield against a modernisation that is wrongly perceived as being imposed by the West and stigmatised as being fraught with danger.

Against this background, we are witnessing a new “protagonism” of the spiritual component, which has carved out a growing space for itself in today’s society but has in some cases taken on extremist forms.

In the collective imagination the perception now prevails that the religious factor inspires conflicts, fundamentalist movement and tensions in so many regions of the world.

On all sides, and for too long, people have been fanning the flame of hateful theories concerning the clash of religions and civilisations and between the west and Islam. Such theories offend both the truth and our fundamental values.

Humanitarian actions and organizations that are based on faith and deep values represent, today, a significant added value in the global framework.

Believers are motivated by the sociality of every human being, so never they act for ambiguous interests, but to pursue the good of the other human beings.

And this is the key to succeed on undertaking action for the poorer people and for the underdeveloped States.

For this reason we should pay tribute to the Sovereign Order of Malta, that is a longstanding protagonist on promoting humanitarian causes all over the world.

It is difficult to speak, today, about a new global order. It should be urgent and necessary, however, to establish a new humanism of the 21st Century, where human beings are at the very centre and their rights and dignity are fully preserved.

**DR HANI EL-BANNA, CO-FOUNDER OF ISLAMIC RELIEF & OF MUSLIM CHARITIES FORUM (MCF)**

*\*He only provided us with a summary of his speech*

Religion is the lifeline of life of every living human on Earth, it can be used as a tool to serve community as well as a tool to please God. Because of this, faith-based organisations will always exist and in order to put their best assets to use, they should work together to create their own values.

However, in recent years we have seen a growing obstacle in the as the atmosphere of xenophobia and Islamophobia becomes increasingly toxic and suspicion falls on faith-based organisations when working in the field, especially in areas under the control of proscribed groups. It becomes ever more important to counter this with peaceful and effective partnerships. But how should an organisation to partner with FBOs who do good work? And how could FBOs continue to help vulnerable people without being called a terrorist organization while working in places like Somalia and Nigeria? These big questions often come from governments and regulators and they affect more than 180 million people worldwide.

Our duty is to serve these people which is why I’m grateful for processes like the World Humanitarian Summit, which is the first such summit in the history of the UN to take a

long, hard look at the way humanitarian systems are affected by local and international law. However, we also need to look beyond the summit and build community at the local level. This means building up local civil society and strengthening communities. It is only through communities that we will adequately meet the need to use religious texts so that they have community value and can produce projects that serve the community.

**AMBASSADOR SLIMANE CHIKH, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF OIC TO UNOG**

Monsieur le Président,

Mesdames, Messieurs

Je souhaite, en tout premier lieu, remercier l'Ordre Souverain de Malta pour l'organisation du présent Symposium portant sur la relation entre religion et action humanitaire ; en préparation au Sommet humanitaire mondial prévu à Istanbul en mai 2016. L'OCI a, dans cette perspective, participé à la consultation régionale pour la région du Moyen Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord (MENA). Elle y a été représentée par l'Assistant Secrétaire Général et Directeur du Département des Affaires Humanitaires, l'Ambassadeur Hicham Youssef qui coprésidé la réunion préparatoire de la région MENA, qui s'est tenue du 3 au 5 mai 2015 à Amman, en Jordanie.

C'est dire que le sujet que nous traitons aujourd'hui est d'une brûlante actualité, compte tenu de la manipulation des crises et des conflits, à travers le monde. L'OCI, dont un nombre croissant de pays membres vivent des crises dramatiques et multiformes, est particulièrement sollicitée pour apporter une réponse humanitaire et se trouve engagée, ainsi, dans plusieurs fronts, Syrie, Irak, Palestine, Libye, Somalie, RCA, Sahel...

Comme aucune réponse adéquate ne peut se faire, en un si large théâtre de conflit, sans coopération et collaboration au niveau international, l'OCI est appelée à joindre ses efforts à ceux déployés par l'ensemble de la communauté internationale pour, ensemble, tenter de mutualiser les moyens humains et matériels et de couvrir les multiples demandes humanitaires en alimentation, soins médicaux, transport, abris, asile...

Il y a lieu de préciser que l'OCI est une organisation à caractère politique et non confessionnel. Elle estime, à ce titre que « l'aide humanitaire ne peut se substituer à l'action politique ». Aussi est-elle engagée sur le terrain de la résolution pacifique des conflits et de l'aide économique au développement, parallèlement à son action humanitaire. Car la recherche de la paix guide l'action de l'OCI qui retient le sens étymologique de l'Islam qui renvoie à Salam (paix).

En effet, d'inspiration religieuse et d'engagement politique, l'OCI se base sur la nécessité du respect de deux valeurs fondamentales que sont le respect de la vie humaine et le respect de la dignité humaine. Ce sont d'ailleurs, deux valeurs partagées par les grandes religions monothéistes et qui forment le ciment de l'action humanitaire aussi bien de l'OCI que des organismes charitables, ainsi que les mouvements de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant Rouge et d'autres organisations non gouvernementales.

C'est d'ailleurs, dans cet engagement collectif et sur le terrain de l'action humanitaire que concrétise le mieux le dialogue des cultures et des civilisations. L'OCI est profondément attachée à ce dialogue, qui constitue l'un des principaux objectifs inscrits dans sa charte et dans son programme d'action décennal (2005-2015), appelé à être poursuivi et actualisé par le

prochain programme décennal qui sera adopté au Conseil des Ministres des Affaires Etrangères prévu à Koweït City le 27 et 28 mai 2015.

C'est en effet l'avenir qu'il s'agit d'envisager, sur la base de l'acquis réalisé :

1. en terme de traitement global de l'action humanitaire, à travers les différentes phases, que sont la préventions, l'action urgente et la consolidation par la résilience ;
2. en terme d'inclusion : l'OCI ne limite pas son action humanitaire au profit des seules victimes musulmanes, mais inclut les victimes d'autres confessions. C'est ainsi que l'OCI, entre autre exemple, s'est proposée de construire deux hôpitaux au Myanmar ; l'un au profit de la minorité musulmane Rohingya et l'autre, au profit de la population Bouddhiste. D'autre part, son aide humanitaire en Centrafrique a concerné les populations des différentes confessions. Il en est de même pour les minorités chrétiennes en Irak qui ont reçu l'aide humanitaire de l'OCI.

S.E. Iyad Madani a dénoncé, à ce propos en juillet 2004, dans un Communiqué de presse « les pratiques terroristes et les menaces proférées par Daech à l'encontre des citoyens chrétiens innocents à Massoul et Ninive, qui ont été sommés de quitter leurs maisons dans le dessein de détruire le tissu social du peuple irakien ».

Il ne s'est pas contenté d'une telle déclaration, mais il a tenu à se déplacer personnellement en Iraq. Il y a rencontré le Président de la région du Kurdistan irakien, S.E. Massoud Barzani. Il a exprimé, à cette occasion la disponibilité de l'OCI à fournir un aide à cette région pour permettre aux victimes des « diverses composantes du peuple irakien dont les yazidis, les kurdes, les chrétiens, les turkmènes, les arabes sunnites et chiites » de faire face à leurs situation de détresse.

Le Secrétaire Général a également rencontré le représentant des yazidis au Parlement du Kurdistan Irakien. Il lui a exprimé « la solidarité agissante de l'OCI à l'égard de sa communauté persécutée. Mr Madani a également rendu visite au Patriarche Chaldéen de Babylone, son Eminence Louis Raphael Sako su siège du Patriarcat et a réitéré la condamnation de l'OCI de « toute agression ou persécution des chrétiens », insistant sur le fait que ceux-ci, « constituent une composante essentielle en Iraq ».

3. en terme de double dénonciation de l'islamophobie et du terrorisme « takfiriste »
4. en terme de coordination avec les organisations humanitaires intervenant auprès des populations musulmanes afin de faciliter aux travailleurs humanitaires non musulmanes l'accès aux victimes (en Somalie) ; afin de convaincre les populations d'accepter la vaccination de leurs enfants contre la poliomyélite (au Nigéria et au Pakistan) ; afin d'acheminer l'aide humanitaire sur le terrain (Syrie). C'est ainsi que l'OCI a développé un important réseau de coopération avec plusieurs organisations humanitaires internationales (OCHA, CICR, UNHCR, OIM...).

Cette action humanitaire multiforme a contribué à apaiser des passions, à prévenir les conflits ou à les résoudre, à apaiser les souffrances de toutes les victimes sans distinction de race ou de religion et à mener des relations étroites d'entente avec CARITAS, la mission du Saint Siège à Genève et ainsi que l'Ordre Souverain de Malte, les leaders religieux actifs dans le domaine de la réconciliation entre les communautés. Le référence à la religion a permis de résoudre certaines conflits et d'apporter à l'action humanitaire ce supplément d'âme « que fait des différents travailleurs humanitaires des frères en humanité ».

**ARCHBISHOP MONS. SILVANO TOMASI, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE HOLY SEE TO UNOG**

a) The source that inspires action by the Catholic community to assist people in need is found in the Gospel. Jesus teaches his disciples that the message of the Law and the Prophets is summed up in the great commandment: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).

Jesus makes charity a new commandment through the example he offers as he gives his life for others. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Thus, Jesus says: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.” Then he adds: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (John, 15:9,12) This love is universal; it embraces every person without distinction; it leads to action.

Therefore, St. Augustine could write: “Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest.” (In ep. Jo. 10, 4).

In this context finds its place the law or principle of solidarity “imposed both by our common origin and by the equality in rational nature of all men” (Pius XII).

Common origin, common destiny, common nature bind the human family together. The religious inspiration for social action to respond to emergencies and to other needs of fellow humans is articulated in the writings of the New Testament and in the constant example of individual Christians and of Christian communities that have implemented this command to share and to be “our brother’s keeper”. There are many failures in upholding the commandment of love that are evident in the course of history. Nevertheless, like a big river that carries much debris at its margins but maintains a constant flow of pure water at its center, the witness of selfless care for the people in need has always been preserved, sustained by the original message and example of the Gospel.

b) In our globalized world, where interdependence is a fact of daily experience, the implementation of the Christian message serves the interests of society and of its members: the hungry are fed; the thirsty are given to drink; the strangers are welcome.; the naked are clothed; the sick are looked after and prisoners are visited. Society is made more humane. In fact cooperation toward the common good is a reasonable undertaking. Independent of religious motivation, the benefits of charitable action impose themselves to a fair mind and they can be accepted as an enlightened self-interest. In the long run or when recompense is not provided, the sustainability of the care for vulnerable groups dries up without the inner motivation that religion inspires.

## **II**

The “civilizing” role of the Christian communities is rooted in history. The assistance provided to people in need, to vulnerable groups, has changed style of delivery in the course of history. It evolves from the early putting in common of resources for distribution according to need in the Jerusalem Church to the pioneering role of monasteries in caring for the sick and in developing agriculture, to today’s advocacy and

a multifaceted offer of social and charitable technical and specialized services. Just to highlight some specific examples as indicators of what is being done as a witness of the love that continues to inspire and sustain Christians, here are some statistics. In the area of education, from kindergarten to university, the Church educates 64,165,860 young people in its schools. In the area of health care services, the Church runs 5,034 hospitals, 16,627 dispensaries, 611 leprosaria. Regarding the area of social services, the Church operates 15,518 homes for the elderly, 9,770 orphanages, 12,082 nurseries, and 14,391 marriage-counselling centers.

Looking for reliable data on the operational action of charity of the Church, I discovered the incredibly complex network of small and large entities dedicated to vulnerable groups in societies and to emergency responses when natural or man-made disasters occur. Much effective service remains unknown because of an attitude of discretion and humility that religious and volunteer personnel have adopted in their generous exercise of Christian charity. For example, the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa of Calcutta do not publicize the incredible service they provide to the most destitute people of society. It would be useful, on the other hand, to have a systematic database reporting the enormous worldwide work undertaken by Church members and organizations. Allow me to provide a few examples of how some of the organizations through which the charity of the Church is exercised.

- ° Caritas Germany does relief and rehabilitation work after disasters, supports social programs for disadvantaged children, disabled persons, for women, elderly, peace-building. It has 590,401 employees. It reaches some 11,000,000 people in 165 countries with an annual budget in 2013 of \$80,827,656.00.

- ° Catholic Relief Service is the U.S. Bishops agency to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. Active in major emergencies, it also fights disease and poverty, support peace endeavors. It reaches some 85,000,000 people in 101 countries and has 365,000 employees with an annual budget in 2013 \$632,526,000.00

- ° Caritas Italy provides health and human services, especially for migrants, the poor and homeless. Last year it assisted for than 135.301 people in more than 60 counties. The operational budget for its charitable work exceeded 45 million dollars.

- ° Caritas France/Secours Catholique provided aid to more than 4 million persons. Their work is focused on solidarity with the poor and migrants. The organization spent over 160 million dollars in its charitable services.

- ° Catholic Relief Service carries the mandate of the U.S. Bishops' Conference to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. Last year they served over 85 million people in over 100 countries with an expenditure of over 632 million dollars.

- ° Jesuit Refugees Service operated a budget of over 49 million, providing service to nearly one million person in 45 countries.

- ° International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) provides assistance and advocacy in the areas of migration, trafficking of persons, refugee resettlement and other types of assistance for persons throughout the world. Their budget last year was over 25 million dollars.

- ° Lutheran World Relief is active in 35 countries, providing humanitarian and social assistance to almost 8 million people, with a budget of 45 million dollars last year.

- ° Norwegian Church Aid provides health and sanitary assistance to over 2 million people in 30 countries with an expenditure of 139 million dollars.
- ° Malteser International, the relief agency of the Sovereign Order of Malta for humanitarian aid, has been standing by those affected by poverty, disease, conflict and disaster, helping them lead a healthy life with dignity. Christian values and the humanitarian principles are the foundation of their work. They serve over 50 million people and have an expenditure of over 26 million dollars.
- ° BICE works to provide protection and advocacy for children. Last year they assisted over 38,000 children, working on a budget of over 3 million dollars.
- ° TROCAIRE assisted 3.4 million persons last year in the developing world with a budget of over 74 million dollars.
- ° CCFD-TERRE SOLIDAIRE engages in humanitarian and social projects, particularly in the fight against hunger. They had a budget last year of over 41 million dollars and are active in 56 developing countries.
- ° World Vision has touched the lives of 420 persons, provided a wide variety of social and humanitarian services in more than 100 countries. They have a budget of over 1 billion dollars.

At times different criteria are used in collecting data, but clearly even this selection of Christian charitable agencies gives evidence of an extraordinary commitment to implementing the message of the Gospel.

### **Immigration tragedies in the Mediterranean**

#### **“The West is washing its hands of it.”**

1. Europe is facing an unprecedented massive transfer of population into its territory. 20.4 million third-country nationals were living legally in the EU in 2013, 4% of the total population. There were 435,385 applications for asylum in 2013 and around 600,000 in 2014. In 2014 more than 276,000 migrants irregularly entered the EU, an increase of 159% compared to 2013. Eurostat reports that in 2010-2012, 30,146 victims of trafficking were registered in the EU. And then, there are the tragedies of the thousands of boat people who have drowned in the Mediterranean and continue to perish in the attempt to cross from North Africa to Europe, a continued tragedy.
2. The EU responsibility is humanitarian and legal. In the first place, saving lives should take precedence over border control. Asylum-seekers should be given the possibility to state their case. Economic migrants may be sent back to their countries of origin, if this is safe.
3. The financial costs incurred by the EU to face the steady flows of people toward its member States is significant. For 2015, Frontex (European agency for security at the borders) has a budget of Euro 114 million. Eurosur, a system of information sharing among member States, has a budget of Euro 224 million for the period 2014-2020. An additional 3 million euro per month have been added for Frontex at the last meeting in April of the Council of the European Union.
4. The situation is extremely complex. An adequate response has to be planned in stages for the long, medium and short term. The priority remains saving lives. Therefore, some



legal safe channels for asylum-seekers should be opened. An exclusively security-oriented approach will not work. The root cause must be addressed. The political and economic relations of the EU States with the countries of origin of the migrants and refugees will have to be addressed.

5. Is the West doing enough? We should look for an answer from the point of view of the victims and their safety and human rights. Then, the governance of massive population displacement should be addressed in a global perspective taking into account political, trade, military, and similar variables.

6. To welcome the stranger is a Gospel imperative. At the same time, this duty has to be placed in the context of the common good of both sending and receiving countries and of the migrants themselves. The shock of the recent drowning of hundreds of asylum-seekers and migrants - 3,500 from January 1 to April 19 2015 - make the urgency to act an imperative.

**PROFESSOR MICHEL VEUTHEY, DEPUTY PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE ORDER OF MALTA TO UNOG, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HUMANITARIAN LAW**

Religions et normes protégeant la vie et la dignité de la personne humaine, en temps de paix et de conflit armé, sont étroitement liées.

Le dialogue entre religions et droit humanitaire nous semble aujourd'hui nécessaire à deux points de vue :

- urgemment pour contribuer à mettre un terme aux trop nombreuses violations du droit international humanitaire aujourd'hui dans les conflits contemporains;

- et dans l'objectif, espérons pas trop lointain, d'établir une éthique universelle pour la protection de la vie et de la dignité de la personne humaine en toutes circonstances pour contribuer à prévenir de futures violations: réaffirmons les principes fondamentaux du droit international humanitaire, ancrons ces principes à nouveau dans la conscience publique de l'humanité (et pas seulement des juristes internationaux qui la connaissent à travers la «Clause de Martens» du Règlement de La Haye de 1899 et de 1907, reprise dans de nombreux traités internationaux); l'aspect religieux constitue en effet, dans la plupart des pays en conflit, un aspect majeur de la conscience publique.

Pour mieux respecter le droit international humanitaire à l'avenir, nous devons mettre en évidence les sources anthropologiques et religieuses, les fondements du droit international humanitaire au sens large (droit de la guerre, droit des réfugiés, droits des migrants) qui se retrouvent dans pratiquement toutes les civilisations. Leur fondement premier est d'assurer la survie des groupes et des civilisations en préconisant la solidarité à l'égard des faibles et des suppliants, et en interdisant dans les hostilités des pratiques telles que de tuer femmes et des enfants, de s'attaquer à des ennemis qui se rendent ou sont hors de combat, de détruire les récoltes, d'empoisonner l'eau potable, de s'en prendre aux lieux et édifices sacrés comme aussi au personnel religieux et humanitaire, car dans l'histoire, les deux (personnel religieux et humanitaire) étaient synonymes...

Aujourd'hui et probablement demain encore davantage, les valeurs religieuses constituent en effet

- dans certaines traditions, un fondement essentiel, le seul à être reconnu, pour la défense de la vie et de la dignité humaine, les règles du droit positif n'étant acceptées que dans la mesure où elles sont compatibles avec ces traditions religieuses ;

- et, plus généralement, un précieux élément complémentaire aux instruments du droit positif, voire un recours moral dans d'autres traditions, dont la tradition occidentale, quand des normes fondamentales du droit positif sont remises en cause par un Gouvernement voire par des acteurs non-étatiques. Ce fut ainsi le cas quand la définition de la torture ayant été modifiée d'un trait de plume par un Gouvernement, des dirigeants spirituels chrétiens, hindous, juifs et musulmans de ce pays ont lancé un appel intitulé « La torture est un problème moral ».

La formulation la plus simple et la plus universelle de ce fondement religieux du droit humanitaire se retrouve dans la «Règle d'Or» : «Ne faites pas aux autres ce que vous ne voudriez pas qu'ils vous fassent» ou, exprimée de manière positive, «Faites aux autres ce que vous voudriez qu'ils vous fassent à vous». C'est la définition la plus simple et la plus concrète de ce qu'est la dignité humaine.

La question centrale («Die Gretchenfrage» diraient nos amis Allemands) est de savoir l'interprétation ouverte ou fermée qu'on donne à cette injonction: s'agit-il de tous les êtres humains, quels qu'ils soient, qu'on a le devoir d'aider et de respecter, ou seulement de ses coreligionnaires? Il va de soi que nous devons à l'avenir promouvoir une interprétation ouverte, sans aucune discrimination de religion. C'est en effet cette ouverture seule qui est conforme aux principes humanitaires fondamentaux de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge d'humanité, de neutralité, d'impartialité, et qui est aussi conforme au principe de non-discrimination, pierre angulaire des droits de l'homme, selon lequel tout être humain, quel qu'il soit, a droit au respect de sa vie et de sa dignité. Le principe de non-discrimination est aussi très clairement mentionné dans le droit international humanitaire, que ce soient pour les règles applicables dans les conflits internationaux ou non, à commencer par l'Article 3 commun aux quatre Conventions de 1949, reconnu par la Cour internationale de Justice comme faisant partie des « considérations élémentaires de l'humanité».

Retrouver cette universalité des fondements dans le droit naturel commun à tous les êtres humains, c'est contribuer à prévenir de futures violations, à un moment où ces règles et principes protégeant la vie et la dignité humaine, s'ils ne sont pas respectés par tous, peuvent amener à des pratiques génocidaires et mettre en péril la survie non seulement de groupes et de civilisations mais bien de l'humanité entière.

C'est la réaffirmation de la valeur unique de la vie et de la dignité humaine, la nécessité de les respecter en toutes circonstances, y compris de conflit armé, à laquelle responsables religieux et juristes positivistes devraient se consacrer en réaffirmant deux Articles communs aux quatre Conventions de Genève de 1949, l'Article Premier sur la responsabilité individuelle et collective des Etats Parties à ces Conventions de les respecter et faire respecter en toutes circonstances, et, sur le fond, l'Article 3 commun, résumé du droit international humanitaire.

Et de montrer que le respect de la vie et de la dignité de la personne humaine, y compris le respect de la famille, de la liberté religieuse, le respect de l'environnement humain et naturel permettant la vie de l'humanité ne sont pas des concessions mais bien des

contributions essentielles à la sécurité des Etats et à la sécurité de la communauté internationale dans son ensemble.

On pourrait ici rappeler cette citation de Montesquieu, dans L'Esprit des Loix :

«Le droit des gens est naturellement fondé sur ce principe: que les diverses nations doivent se faire dans la paix le plus de bien, et dans la guerre le moins de mal qu'il est possible, sans nuire à leurs véritables intérêts»

Il serait finalement très important de montrer et de tenir à jour des exemples concrets de «bonnes pratiques» de solidarité interculturelles, de limites dans l'exercice de la violence, d'efforts de dirigeants et de communautés religieuses pour contribuer à la résolution pacifique de conflits et de participer à la reconstruction non seulement de villes et de campagnes mais aussi de communautés à travers leurs diversités comme ce fut le cas à travers des Commissions Vérité et Réconciliation notamment en Afrique et en Amérique latine, pour la plupart fruits de collaborations entre responsables religieux et experts des Droits de l'Homme.

Alors que nous allons célébrer cette année le 70e anniversaire de la signature et de l'entrée en vigueur de la Charte des Nations Unies, il pourrait être utile, voire indispensable, de dégager, dans un dialogue entre représentants de religions, juristes et humanitaires, des valeurs universellement partagées pour efficacement assister et protéger les victimes des conflits actuels, pour contribuer – par des actions de respect mutuel et de solidarité mettant en évidence notre commune humanité - à trouver des solutions pacifiques à ces conflits et pour s'engager résolument dans une collaboration mondiale en vue du bien commun et de la survie de l'humanité entière.

Le Pape Jean-Paul II, s'adressant le 13 janvier 1997 au Corps diplomatique accrédité auprès du Saint-Siège, rappelait la nécessité de compléter le droit par la morale, et montrait aussi les deux fondements de l'humanitaire :

"Le droit international été pendant longtemps un droit de la guerre et de la paix. Je crois qu'il est de plus en plus appelé à devenir exclusivement un droit de la paix conçue en fonction de la justice et de la solidarité. Et, dans ce contexte, la morale doit féconder le droit; elle peut même exercer une fonction d'anticipation sur le droit, dans la mesure où elle lui indique la direction de ce qui est juste et bien."

**SWAMI AMARANANDA, DIRECTOR OF THE VEDANTIC CENTRE IN GENEVA, REPRESENTING THE ORDER OF RAMAKRISHNA**

I thank the Order of Malta for the organization of the symposium. I represent Centre Vedantique, Geneva which is affiliated to the Order of Ramakrishna. The Order of Ramakrishna is dedicated to helping all irrespective of religion and nationality. I would like to mention, as an example, the January 1964 massacre of Hindus in Bangladesh and the massacre of Muslims in Kolkata in retaliation. The Order of Ramakrishna went to the victims in Kolkata, where Muslims accepted its help, because they knew about our acceptance of all religions. The Order of Ramakrishna strives to maintain equidistance from political parties everywhere. We also believe that the education of girls is more important than that of boys, because when a girl is educated, a whole family gets uplifted. As educators, advocates, intermediaries, mediators etc. our Order helps in peace-building across India, where 205 districts, in 2013, were hit by terrorist activities.

There is also a big number of internally displaced persons (IDP) in India due to conflicts. As of April 2015, IDP's in India counted more than 0.6 million heads.

In the future, actors in the name of religion and humanitarian principles should be conversant with the salient points of religions different from their own; otherwise they would not be able to act properly, profoundly. These actors should accept different religions. People ask: "How to do so, in view of the apparent differences among religions?" Mystics across religions have had access to eternal bliss and peace. That shows the validity of the major religions. Our Order accepts sincerely, not just tolerates, all the major religions; for doing this, it does not emphasize the dogmas.

One may predict with certitude that in the days to come religions would face more and more of challenge from science. In this connection, one idea of the philosopher J. S. Mill comes to my mind. Mr. Mill upheld that in religions also we should apply the methods by which truth is arrived at in science, an idea treasured by Swami Vivekananda, the consolidator of the Ramakrishna Order. Vivekananda said that if one applies this principle in the domain of religions, many cherished things will be shattered, but jewels in the bosom of religions will shine brighter.

I must admit that I am not quite comfortable with the word faith, because faith is something that is accepted, with a little doubt in the innermost recess of the heart. Religious leaders must come with tremendous conviction, conviction based on experiences of mystics. If one doubts about the existence of God or a transcendental ultimate entity, one should not be in religion.

I shall terminate by rendering homage to Mahatma Gandhi and to Henry Dunant, a great son of Geneva. Gandhiji worked gloriously in difficult times, in the midst of heightened religious intolerance. The life of Dunant has a parallel with that of Emperor Ashoka, as both men were transformed by experiences of human suffering in the battlefield. If individuals like Gandhiji and Dunant could do what they did, organizations, with long traditions and imbued with higher values, should do much better.

**DOMINIQUE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD-MONTBEL, GRAND HOSPITALLER AND MINISTER OF HEALTH AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA**

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to add my welcome to that of Mrs Pictet-Althann to this symposium, which is meant as a contribution to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. My particular thanks to the Director General at the United Nations in Geneva Michael Møller and to the Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat Jamilah Mahmood for hosting this event. It is very encouraging to see so many representatives from both the religious and the humanitarian worlds, and the fact that many of you have travelled so far reminds us how important our work is.

As we gather here today, there are some 180 million people affected by conflict worldwide. We have not seen such a high number since the Second World War. Often we do not understand enough the complex causes of conflict. The proliferation of crises and needs is extraordinary as are the dramatic humanitarian consequences. The millions of people affected by a variety of very different major crises, place unique demands on all humanitarian actors. 80 million people worldwide depend on humanitarian assistance for their mere survival, the majority of them live in regions of conflict. It is sad but true that

conflict will continue to harm millions of people, and will indeed become a normal scenario, in the next 10-15 years. Conflict will remain an increasingly important component of humanitarian assistance, and we need to be prepared for this and to look for new methods and instruments.

Allow me to take a moment to explain the source of the special concern that the Sovereign Order of Malta shares for people in conflict. As you may know, the Order was founded more than 900 years ago in the Holy Land as an institution to serve injured and sick pilgrims. Its mission was soon extended to care for all people in need with no distinction of race, religion, and ethnical origin. This mission is carried out today in about 120 countries. For more than 900 years, the Order has been recognised as an international sovereign entity, and although it lost control of its principal territory, the islands of Malta, it has retained its identity as an international sovereign body. Today, our headquarters in Rome is regarded as 'extraterritorial' by the surrounding state of Italy. We have formal diplomatic relations with 105 countries – many of which are non-Catholic - and we exchange ambassadors with these other states. The Order was also granted Permanent Observer status at the United Nations in 1994.

Today, I want to focus on the humanitarian work of the Order, which has become a major part of our activities over generations. Our commitment to the sick and the poor is absolutely impartial and neutral. Not only is the Order not aligned with any political block, our humanitarian programmes are administered regardless of religion or race. The Order's humanitarian relief agency, Malteser International, is ensuring the health and dignity of millions of people around the globe by implementing over 100 projects.

With great concern, we observe a fast decreasing regard for humanitarian principles. The great achievements of the family of nations after the two World Wars in codifying humanitarian principles to be observed in wars and armed conflicts are in danger of becoming mere papers. The generation to come may only see them displayed in a museum and deplore the loss of high cultural achievements of a past civilisation. We must not accept this and must work together to find innovative ways to fight this tendency.

Against the background of this experience and in working with the poor and the sick who have become the innocent victims of conflict worldwide, the Order highly appreciates and welcomes the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to convene the World Humanitarian Summit.

Bringing together the global community in order to forge new partnerships and find better ways to meet humanitarian needs in the future, is nowadays absolutely mandatory.

In order to contribute and support this initiative, we are gathered here today to explore how faith-based institutions and humanitarian actors can better assist and protect civilians in times of conflict – and more specifically, what could be the distinguishing help of faith-based institutions. This exploration needs to combine an investigation of the dimensions of conflict, religion and humanitarian aid. Only by viewing these three dimensions in combination is it possible to make an objective assessment, and to draw good conclusions for our future work. To get a better grasp of how religious institutions and organisations can improve, we need to deal with the role of religion in conflict; be honest about both the positive and negative impact of humanitarian aid on situations of conflict; as well as explore the particular role that faith-based organisations play when they provide humanitarian aid in conflicts and elsewhere.

Wars have been fought in the name of different gods and goddesses since ancient times. Therefore, it is often suggested that since religion has been involved in all sorts of

conflicts, it is at the core of these clashes. The current barbarities committed worldwide by groups which refer to a religion for their justification - ISIS/Da-ish, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and the Christian anti-Balaka (CAR), to name a just few – and the longstanding regional conflicts in the Near and Middle East are prompting many people to ask if religion is the cause of most conflicts in the world. I think that it is far too simplistic to lay the blame on religion as the main source of conflict. The last century was full of examples of mass killing and wars, which needed no god. The picture of war is too complex to paint with just one colour, and when it comes to the role of religion, it is my firm belief that religion is misused as a source of influence to pursue the very secular interests of power. Religious motivations can induce violence when separated from moral content and poisoned by corruption and driven by power. Conflicts may contain religious elements. However, they are always driven by cultural, economic, ethnic, territorial and other factors such as external pressures. Maybe the answer to conflicts with a religious element is not less religion, but more; more of religion's peaceful, non-violent content as a rich source of reconciliation, social tolerance, devotion, humanitarian commitment, empowerment and peace-building.

Taking this up, it is both interesting and striking that humanitarian aid itself is often contested in the same way as religion. The equivalent to the question of whether religion causes war is: "Does humanitarian aid prolong conflict"? Everyone in the humanitarian world knows about the problems and negative effects of humanitarian aid. Conflict parties often manipulate aid for their own benefit; agencies create aid dependency; assistance is used as a substitute for political action; the issue of aid giving power to belligerents; and many other issues can influence the dynamics of conflict in terms of its duration and violence. However, here again the picture is incomplete. Humanitarians know about these challenges and are doing their best to mitigate the consequences. Standards, norms and principles have been put in place, and even if these measures are often overruled by reality, the humanitarians are rarely the most responsible for that. They choose to save lives where they can, and this is most important in those settings that are far from the ideal humanitarian world. Helping people has never been easy. Therefore, one should not contest humanitarian aid at every possible opportunity, but work to improve the humanitarian system in all its facets. This is the right thing to do. In this way, our approach to humanitarian aid in conflict should be similar to our approach to religion in conflict: Not less humanitarian aid, but more, is the answer; in the same way that not less religion, but more is needed, coupled always with an acute awareness of its positive and negative effects.

This leads me to the role of 'faith-based' or religion-based institutions and organisations in humanitarian aid. In dealing with the issues of conflict, humanitarianism and religion, the circle of themes for today's symposium becomes complete.

The question in this context is what makes us as religion-based actors distinct from secular actors. Do we do different things, or do we do the same things differently? Everybody now recognises that religion-based actors are a crucial part of the architecture of international humanitarian activity. The common perception is that this is true because religion-based actors and faith-based organisations have professionalised to the point of having no differences to secular actors.

However, I strongly believe that religious actors have a unique position through the power of their conviction; their reach; their motivation; and their longevity, over and above that of secular organisations. Assisting the poor is deeply rooted in the teachings of religions. Further, I believe that the particular strengths of religion-based actors do not stop at the operational level. We never lose sight of the spiritual dimension of people in

need. Our assistance responds not only to material demands, combining technical care with an ethical and spiritual dimension.

However, we should not conceal the challenges that are particular to some faith-based actors. Faith-based action is rightly challenged when faith actors exclude members of other faith backgrounds; proselytise and put pressure on people to convert as a precondition for support; or when they stigmatise and discriminate against individuals or groups of people. The inappropriate behavior of just one faith actor can discredit us all. We therefore must do everything we can to lead by example and to demonstrate that faith-based action does not undermine the principles of impartiality and neutrality, and that our spiritual vision is not in conflict with the impartial humanitarian imperative. We must be moved to act by faith, in an inclusive, not exclusive way.

I firmly believe that we are all well positioned to develop our approach and to adapt to the challenges of a changing world. Steps forward to improve the assistance of people in conflicts need to include: the better usage of the unique strengths of faith-based actors; the promotion of the positive role for reconciliation that religion can play through the unifying power of shared faith or the shared conviction that religion is the source of their values; the establishment of interreligious dialogue to learn about other religions and provide for a common understanding of our special humanitarian mandate. These elements, among others, are crucial to improve our position and enhance our effectiveness. Religion based actors are well placed to interact with the religious infrastructure in affected areas, which in most cases plays a crucial role in organising help and promoting peace.

In conclusion let me share with you two examples. After the terrible tsunami in 2005 we helped to rebuild villages in Aceh, Indonesia. When I visited the region the local Mullah while greeting me at the entrance of the village, remarked how satisfied he was for being helped by people who were honouring God. He then invited me to the newly built mosque to pray together. Him saying his Muslim prayer, myself my Christian prayer.

In Lebanon our Order runs ten socio-medical centres all over the country, some of them in close cooperation with other religions, with the Druse, the Sunnites and in the South with the Shiites. There, Shiite nurses wear our cross on their working dress. The cooperation in the humanitarian field of religious-based organisations plants seeds of peace and creates a bond of mutual trust and confidence among people of different religions.

I am very pleased that today we can embark on a journey of mutual discovery. I would like to thank you very much for your kind attention and I hope the symposium will be a great success.

## 12. PROGRAM



### Symposium

#### "Religions Together for Humanitarian Action"

*Reaching out to victims of armed conflicts: the special role of faith-based actors*

*Geneva, Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015, 1 – 6 pm*

*Palais des Nations, Room XVII*

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|-----------------|---|
| <b>11.30 am</b> | <b>Registration</b>   |
| <b>12.30 am</b> | <b>Sandwiches</b>   |
| <b>1.00 pm</b>  | <b>Welcome</b> by H.E. Amb. Marie-Thérèse Pictet Althann, the Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the United Nations in Geneva<br><b>Official Opening</b> of the Symposium by the Under-Secretary General Mr Michael Møller Director General of UNOG<br><b>Introductory remarks</b> by H.E. Amb. Stefano Ronca, the Diplomatic Adviser of the Grand Chancellor of the Sovereign Order of Malta  |
| <b>1.15 pm</b>  | <b><u>Keynote Address by the Grand Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs</u></b> of the Sovereign Order of Malta H.E. Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager   |
| <b>1.30 pm</b>  | <b>First High-Level Panel Discussion:</b> “ <i>Present Challenges for faith-based institutions: religions and Humanity in times of Conflict and Crisis</i> ” (Moderator: Mr. Oliver McTernan)<br><br>Interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Dr Jemilah Mahmood</b>, Chief of the WHS Secretariat</li><li>• <b>Mr Franco Frattini</b>, Former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, President of SIOI</li><li>• <b>Dr Hani El-Banna</b> Co-Founder of Islamic Relief</li></ul> |



- **Min.Plen. Giampaolo Cantini**, Italian Director General for Development and Cooperation
- **Grand Rabbi Marc Raphaël Guedj**, President of the “Racines et Sources” Foundation

**2.15 pm**                    **General Debate**

**3.20 pm**                    **Coffee Break**

**3.50 pm**                    **Second High-Level Panel Discussion:** *“Preparing for the future. How can faith-based institutions better assist and protect civilian populations in times of conflict”* (Moderator: Mr Alberto Negri)

Interventions:

- **Mr Alexander Aleinikoff**, UNHCR Deputy High-Commissioner
- **HE Amb. Slimane Chikh**, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the UN in Geneva
- **HE Archbishop Mons. Silvano Tomasi**, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva
- **Prof. Michel Veuthey**, Vice President of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law
- **Swami Amarananda**, Director of the Vedantic Centre in Geneva

**4.30 pm**                    **General Debate**

**5.45 pm**                    **Conclusions and way forward by the Grand Hospitaller and Minister of Health and International Cooperation** of the Sovereign Order of Malta  
H.E. Dominique, Prince de La Rochefoucauld-Montbel

## 13. LINKS

1) clips of the Symposium

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B06WhKnBJzAbfndKZU5wVFdVRFlhOU1XLUdSYnpEbXFSZEtXNH03blZUTHduS2swbmEzX3c&usp=sharing>

2) TV report of the Symposium

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=O4viTo1hSl0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=O4viTo1hSl0)

3) Short version (3 min.) Interview Mr. Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=95ws5A58Kv4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=95ws5A58Kv4)

4) Full length version (8 min.) Interview Mr. Maurer (ICRC)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=JF89O-eXoQE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=JF89O-eXoQE)