



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

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NEW YORK

United Nations Water Conference

General Assembly

Mr. Peter McGuire

22nd March 2023

Mr. President, Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

This week's conference marks the midway point of the United Nations decade of water and yet access to clean water remains a multidimensional crisis that requires more effort, dialogue and, most importantly, action.

It goes without saying that access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, are basic human rights that, when fulfilled, give way to a fair and equitable life. Yet, as is universally known, billions of people around the world still lack access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities, with the continued threats of conflict and climate related disasters hindering this problem further. To quote Pope Francis from his Encyclical *Laudito Si*': 'Our world has a grave social debt towards the



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poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity’.

The Sovereign Order of Malta has long joined many others in taking up this cause to ensure this right is realised for everyone, especially the marginalised and vulnerable populations, and our Mission remains an active member and contributor to the ‘Group of Friends on Water and Peace’ in Geneva.

For more than 25 years, we have, through our International Aid Agency ‘Malteser International’, implemented various WASH activities that have had a significant impact on the lives of the communities we serve across the world.

One of our many initiatives is the Global Program on WASH and Human Rights that covers interventions in India, Nepal, and Uganda. This program seeks to improve access to safe water and sanitation, as well as to promote good hygiene practices, mainly by working through decentralised



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authorities who are strengthened in identifying and targeting the communities which are most in need for these services.

Furthermore, in addressing target 6.2 of the SDGs, we purposefully approach our work using a strong gender-based lens, with one of the specific areas we focus on being menstrual hygiene management. Many millions of girls and women in developing countries lack access to adequate sanitary products and facilities, which, as we know, lead to severe health and educational concerns. Our menstrual hygiene management programs seek to improve access to sanitary products and facilities and to promote good menstrual hygiene practices, thereby providing greater incentives for girls to remain in education.

Moreover, to promote advancement in sustainable development, the Order of Malta proudly promotes the implementation of WASH systems through the use of solarized water pumping and other sustainable technologies. We are currently in the process of handing over 20 solarized water systems to refugee settlements of Northern Uganda in order to



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provide safe water to over 50,000 people. This is a number we hope to multiply with support from local and international agencies.

Only when we dive deeper into each of the targets and indicators of the SDGs do we begin to fully comprehend the multifaceted nature and unshakeable importance of every single one of them and this is no more evident than with SDG6. Our aforementioned efforts towards water access only emulate many other entities and member states around the world. Like them, we have a heavy reliance on partnering with local workforces and NGOs that understand the most pressing local and community needs along with the most effective solutions. There's a reason why SDG17 perhaps gains the most attention at the United Nations and this is because, through the use of partnerships and the pooling together of resources, only then do we find ourselves in a position to fully succeed with the 2030 Agenda, like achieving universal and equitable access to safe water for all.

I thank you Mr. President.