

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR GIUSEPPE BONANNO DI LINGUAGLOSSA

PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA

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Item 10 Review of the State of Food and Agriculture

Mr. Chairperson, Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since this is the first time I take the floor, allow me to congratulate the Director-General on his successful re-election with an overwhelming majority of the vote of the FAO membership, a remarkable 177 votes, and to express, on behalf of the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta, our deep appreciation for the work accomplished by FAO so far and our full support for the new direction the Organization is taking.

The Sovereign Order of Malta welcomes FAO's renewed focus on fighting poverty and eliminating hunger, including in singling out women as a group that requires priority attention. This brings FAO ever closer to the areas of work the Order is engaged in, as a brief look at the Order's activities shows.

In fact, the Order of Malta is probably one of the oldest human institutions targeted at fighting poverty, hunger and disease, and has done so now for over 900 years. The Order's target group has always been and is still today vulnerable people everywhere, particularly women, the young and the elderly.

With over 120,000 members, medical staff and volunteers working in 120 countries, the Order of Malta has recently jacked up its activities, entering in cooperation agreements with other states with the purpose of establishing or strengthening the healthcare, welfare or humanitarian services in the country. Since 2010, the Order has entered into such agreements with 15 countries, in Europe, Africa and Latin America. Moreover, in 2012, the Order has signed onto operative frameworks with international organizations, similar to the one signed with FAO in 2005, with the aim of engaging in joint activities – notably with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to focus on preventing human trafficking, drug abuse and corruption; and with the International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEA), with the aim of supporting the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy. The Order, with its special emergency corps, Malteser International, is also very active in all the “hot spots” around the world, most recently assisting the emergency caused by the war in Syria – for example with a mobile clinic for Syrian refugees in Lebanon – and following the devastating earthquake in Nepal, with, *inter alia*, a new Malteser International field hospital that will provide longer-term help for those in regions without access to medical care.

The Order of Malta is looking forward to both the FAO's and the United Nations' new directions that are shaping up in the post-2015 Agenda, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals aimed at fighting poverty and hunger, including the welcome expansion in the area of social protection that requires particular attention. As the Pope said to FAO in 2013, “A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the

affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being.”

Justice, fairness and respect are at the heart of the fight to eliminate hunger, and, for that matter, they are the very wellspring of sustainable development. That is the direction FAO and the UN System is taking in the post-2015 Agenda and the Order of the Malta welcomes it. The FAO Director-General can rest assured that the Order of Malta stands ready to contribute to the efforts of the world community to “enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth.”

As the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta, Fra’ Matthew Festing, said, “We were there yesterday, we will be there tomorrow, the day after, and for as long as the need remains.”

Rome, 10 June 2015