



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

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

***Human Rights Council – 44<sup>th</sup> Session –  
Item 3.- Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Leprosy***

***Statement by Mr. Hervé Arot,  
Main Representative of the Sovereign Order of Malta's Leprosy  
CIOMAL Foundation***

***Geneva, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020***

Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

CIOMAL Foundation (*Campagne Internationale de l'Ordre de Malte contre la Lèpre*) of the Order of Malta has been engaged in the fight against leprosy/Hansen's disease for several decades at all levels and mainly: access to care, detection, prophylaxis, socio-economic rehabilitation, awareness raising, stigma prevention, advocacy and empowerment.

Firstly, CIOMAL Foundation and the Sovereign Order of Malta strongly support the request for extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by Leprosy and their family members, in order to ensure the fullest possible application of the principles and guidelines approved by the General Assembly in 2010.

Secondly, in the report *Policy framework for rights-based action plans* presented by the Special Rapporteur to the Council, we wish to focus on item V. related to empowerment.

Indeed, in a context of global reduction in the incidence of the disease, it is timely and appropriate to insist on empowerment which enables people affected by leprosy to defend their fundamental rights by themselves. Through associative groups, they have the opportunity to become privileged interlocutors of public administrations as well as international bodies. In Cambodia, for example, CIOMAL Foundation has supported the creation of an association, the first in the history of the country, representing people affected by leprosy, which acts within wider structures for the protection of disabled people set up by the public administration.

Moreover, empowerment is a low financial burden action to implement at the national level and this aspect should motivate all stakeholders in the fight against leprosy and discrimination.

Finally, empowerment can be exercised to the benefit of all human rights.

We are therefore grateful to the Special Rapporteur for having included empowerment in the *Policy framework for rights-based action plans*, as it is a natural step to take in order to improve the living conditions of people affected by leprosy and their families.

We call upon all States to foster and facilitate the implementation of this part of the action plans set out by the Special Rapporteur, as well as of the other recommendations contained in the policy framework.

Thank you for your attention.