Dear MSFs,

In preparation for the next International Council meeting on October 3 and 4 we are taking an initiative aimed at facilitating the development and structuring of our movement. In line with the decision taken at the June IC meeting, the October meeting should be the last meeting held with the IC as it is presently composed. That meeting must prepare for the future and this letter is intended to encourage you to put forward what you think about it.

Enough of rules and regulations, let us know what your ambitions are for the future and assure us that there is a mutual confidence between us. "Internationality" is an intrinsic value for MSF. It belongs to no one in particular. It is a strength that can always be denigrated (and there have been many attempts at that during the course of our history), but it always rises again because it is to be found in each of us individually, just as much as in our name.

Today, we must convert this internationality into organisational terms. This ambition would be implacably refuted and discredited if all of those who call themselves and recognize themselves as members of MSF could not be associated on an equal footing. It therefore seems to us that it would be better, despite difficulties linked with the number, to now envisage an IC of 19 members. As internationalism will not progress in an uncontrolled and irresponsible manner, we can already confidently anticipate that MSF will be enriched by those who join in the future.

This is why we want to propose setting up an IC of 19 members as soon as possible to function as a real instrument for building and organising the MSF movement. It follows from this that the present distinction between operational sections and delegate offices will have to disappear. The evolution of the notion of a group, as well as the operational character of each branch of MSF, should be envisaged calmly and without fearing the worst either now or later.

The mission of this enlarged and newly formulated IC would be:
- the international development and organisation of the movement: coordinating actions, rules and codes of conduct, development and growth policies, creating new branches, etc.
- the elaboration and evolution of the MSF "doctrine", as well as follow-up on how it is applied: Charter, Chantilly texts, etc.
It is clear that the exact composition of the group, how decisions will be reached (what majority will be required?), the frequency of meetings, the importance of its decisions for each one in the movement, etc. - all this remains to be determined, and we would prefer to let the debate be wide open from the beginning.

However, a group of this size will find it difficult to make decisions and react on detailed points. A restricted, functional “executive committee”, emanating from the group but remaining representative of the movement as a whole, will therefore have to be considered. The constitution of this committee will also have to be defined, the type of delegate from the IC, what authority it will have in regard to all in general and national Boards in particular, its eventual role as a referee, the kind of decisions it will take and the extent of its involvement in operations.

This is why we are looking for reactions, suggestions and alternative proposals from you that can be debated in October. A more detailed proposition could then result, which would be discussed by national Boards of Directors and finally adopted in a definitive form at the meeting of all the branches foreseen for January 1997.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

With our best wishes to you all,

Philippe Biberson
Jean-Marie Kindermans