Dear Philippe,

Thank you for your paper in which you propose to enlarge the IC with the membership of the delegate offices and to create a kind of executive committee. The focus of this enlarged body should be the international development of the movement and the evolution of the MSF doctrine. A kind of smaller executive committee should deal with other more operational matters.

We discussed your paper in our board and we admired your courage to propose a dynamism for fundamental change of the international functioning without any preconditions. Not just some improvements but a radical change of the functioning involving a lot of implications.

The other side of the coin is that we considered your text as being vague; a new starting structure is mentioned but not a change in responsibility vis a vis the existing CI and change of authority vis a vis the existing national boards. At this moment the IC is functioning as a kind of security council; a rather small group disagreeing about a lot, but at the end of the day—often in a crisis atmosphere—able to take decisions on the internationalisation (See Chantilly) or positions concerning our activities on the ground. It can take decisions because of the very fact that the 3 big sections together are de facto a center of power and this reality is reflected in the attribution of the veto right. As your predecessor said when we discussed this point 5 years ago: everybody in the IC is equal but some are more equal than others, otherwise the IC will not be able to take and implement decisions.

Therefor, I hope that we have to read your proposal in the sense of a strengthening of the international governance structure: a powerful center able to give guidance to MSF as a international movement. And not a governance structure paralysed by its number and by the lack of authority—something like a United Nation without Security Council or—using another example—the European Parliament. A central point for discussion in the IC meeting.

Another remark are the Post Chantilly projects. The MSF Holland board considers a successful implementation of the Post Chantilly Projects as important as the restructuring of the IC. Those projects—ET, international newsletter, human resources, ...—were selected because of their integrating value: through them a new more international MSF generation would be created. We should continue to emphasise the value of those projects—we have just started!—and make them a success. I fear that a revolutionary restructuring of the top eventually will fail if we fail creating concrete ‘internal success’ at the bottom of the organisation.

The operationality of the delegate offices is an issue of another nature. It has nothing to do with the international governance structure, but more with the operational functionality of the different parts (division of roles between the parts to be together as effective as possible). If we really want to reconsider the operationality of the delegate offices, it should be from the beginning crystal clear why we want this. What is the underlying motivation. Otherwise this discussion will lead to false expectations, to frustration and more mistrust.

Another point of discussion is the timing and chronology of this restructuring process. Is the restructuring of the IC the starting point of this change process, or should it be the result of well expressed common ambitions. The enlargement of the board now—without empowerment and clarity of its specific authority—could lead to a vacuum and paralysis in the international functioning and a desintegration of the international movement instead of the foreseen integrative leap forward. We think that the authority of this governance body and the decision making rules have to be organised and to be crystal clear.
before we change the IC in its actual form. This does not mean that we cannot enlarge the IC by giving for example the status of observer to the delegate office members.

So,

- I propose that a mixed working group of IC and delegate office members supported by 'external expertise' will be formed to study the necessary changes in the international structure, the fields of authorities of a central international body and the consequences for the transfer of authority - and autonomy! - by the national boards and movements. Deadline before the next general assemblies to submit the proposals for substantive change to the members. This is internationalisation by pull.

- In parallel we continue to put a lot of emphasis on the Post Chantilly projects. 'The proof of the pudding is the eating'. International human resources, international internal communication and international operations. This is internationalisation by push.

- In the mean time we allow the delegate offices or a delegation of the DO to be - partly?- observers in the IC meetings. The exact form can vary and depends on the feasibility. We cannot have meetings each three months with 25 people. And one enlarged IC meeting every year is fake.

- The board of MSF Holland considers it for the time being not wise to weaken the existing 'security council like' power structure -including the veto right- before a strong new authority is in place.

Some specific points:

- The national boards should make clear if they are ready - and why- for allowing new operational sections - given the rather narrow scope of core activities mentioned in the Chantilly.

- The national boards should make clear if they are ready to put more authority on international level. And how to deal with the democratic gap if there is no real international membership movement? To whom is this international board accountable.

I consider the debate to be open and I hope the next general assemblies will be able to vote on proposals which will make of MSF a genuine international organisation instead of a committee of nations.

My best regards,

Jacques de Milliano.