International Council
Brussels, 6/28/98

Moderator: Doris Schopper
Minutes: Isabelle Petit

Present:
Philippe Biberson (MSF-F), Marleen Boelaert (MSF-B), Odysseas Boudouris (MSF-Gr), Olivier Dechevrens (MSF-CH), Jens Hillingso (MSF-DK), Nicola Kaatsch (MSF-D), Dominique Leguiller (MSF-J), Bart Meijman (MSF-NL), Morten Nostrup (MSF-N), Miguel-Angel Peres (MSF-E), Romain Poos (MSF-L), Doris Schopper (présidente), Clemens Vlasich (MSF-Austria),

Apologies:
Alain Guilloux (MSF-HK), Filomena Pietrantonio (MSF-I), Michaël Schull (MSF-Canada), Joëlle Tanguy (MSF-USA), Fiona Terry (MSF-Australia), Eric Vreede (MSF-UK), Johan Von Schreeb (MSF-S).

The September International Council meeting decided to open the post of International President and to reconsider the job profile. Three people applied for the position: Odysseas Boudouris, Eric Goemaere and James Orbinsky. Eric later withdrew his application on Friday, 26 June.

Various questions remain in suspense, mainly in regard to three points:
the acceptability of a co-opted International President;
the salary;
the job profile.

The objective of the meeting was discussed first of all. Several IC members asking for the decision to be postponed as long as the above-mentioned points had not been clarified as absent members could not vote without being duly informed of the discussion and the decisions taken. They thus considered that this meeting should be regarded as a working session to advance the reflection process and that the actual decision should be postponed to a later date.

Other members insisted that it was important for the whole MSF movement, particularly the field, that a decision expected for almost a year and already postponed should not be delayed further.

Odysseas stressed that he had no wish to be involved in a process that did not represent a consensus. A majority could, in fact, elect one or other candidate without the result being acceptable to the whole IC. Such a situation would not be healthy and would lead to conflict.

It therefore seemed important to reach a decision by consensus rather than by a cumbersome voting procedure that not all members of the IC would agree with in the same way.
Co-option
Attention was drawn to the decision made at the IC meetings in September and March allowing for the IC President to be co-opted during this exceptional phase in the evolution of MSF. Some members considered that this decision ran the risk of creating an undesirable precedent. Philippe also stressed that the French section is opposed to a co-opted President.

As a majority voted in favour of opening the post to outsiders, this was finally accepted.

Bart then proposed that the presidency should be composed of three people: James would be President while Odysséas and another person still to be determined would be Vice-Presidents. This solution, for a maximum period of two years, would allow the installation of a definitive structure for the IC (all members would be elected presidents). At the end of this period of transition an IC member should hold the presidency.

This proposal seemed to be a good compromise in the sense that it would allow a rapid decision to be made. The members present considered it important, however, that absent members should be consulted on this proposal as well as on possible candidates for Vice-President.

Job profile and salary
Only Philippe Biberson was opposed to the job profile proposed by Doris. He considered that the role of external representation and arbitration should be reduced. He also feared that providing a complete salary would increase bureaucracy and result in a considerable expense for a much lower plus-value. Marleen was of the opinion that providing a complete salary would guarantee satisfactory contact with the field.

After discussion it was decided to preserve the initial job profile while extending it to the whole "presidential team". The President will be given a full-time salary, but with a proportion to be determined allotted for the field and for research work. The salary will be on a scale corresponding to that of section presidents. The Vice-Presidents will not be salaried. Only section presidents will be eligible to become Vice-Presidents.

The final proposal
Considering that not all IC members are presently elected section presidents it was agreed to have a transition period of two years. During this period the President may be co-opted. As from July 1998 three people will assume the presidency: James Orbinsky to be President of the IC and Odysséas Boudouris and another person to be determined as Vice-Presidents.

The job profile prepared for the IC by Doris Schopper was accepted, but extended to include the whole "presidential team". This team should prepare a proposal for the IC on how it considers it should function.

In order to preserve the principle of voluntary service, the President will not be paid a full-time salary only for this role. It was agreed that a significant part of his time
would be used for the presidency, the remainder to be employed in research work for MSF and in field-level activities. The Vice-Presidents will not be salaried.

The three people will be nominated for a 12-month mandate at the end of which an evaluation will be made. The mandate may be renewed once and will have a maximum length of two years.

James and Odysséas then gave their reasons for applying and outlined their objectives for the IC (see attached letters).

James pointed out that some IC members had expressed doubts as to the legitimacy of a co-opted President. He stressed that he was not ready to take up this challenge unless he had the full support of the IC. All the IC members present assured him that the IC would give him the necessary support.

This decision, reached by consensus among the members present, was proposed to absent members by telephone. The decision was accepted unanimously by all IC members. James Orbinsky was therefore nominated as President of the IC. Odysséas Boudouris and another person still to be determined will become Vice-Presidents.