Minutes of the meeting of the Restricted Committee- Geneva, 16 & 17 January 1998


1) International members of the boards

a. It was decided two years ago that on the boards of “old” sections there should be members of other sections to improve communication and understanding between sections. The question is whether these persons should be member of another board (but then this limits their availability), or people from executive teams (but then should they inform the boards of their section and how?). The Belgium board decided that they represent the Belgium section in other boards, but for the other sections, do they represent themselves or their section?
b. The participation on the boards of the former delegate offices was mostly from people coming from the executive of “mother” sections. It was felt as a kind of control.

The RC agrees that for the first paragraph, it is preferable that one person be elected and chosen for her personal abilities and experience with a view to enriching the board. She has also the role of informing her own section, thereby enforcing cross fertilisation. For the second paragraph, ex DO should become autonomous “associations” in the future. This means that the outside person should also be elected. The way this should be done will correspond to the proper “associative” evolution of the section. In both cases, either somebody from the executive or the board of another section is eligible.

2) Paid presidency

As it becomes evident that the workload of the presidents of an “operational centre” has increased quite a lot, partly also due to the process of internationalisation, there is an imbalance between those who are salaried or compensated by MSF, and those who have a full-time job on the side. The RC is in favour of a part time presidency (a full-time presidency raising adverse effects). In order not to restrict the choice to people who have the possibility to do it for free, sections should find a way to compensate their president for his work.

3) Mandate of the Director of the International Office

Jean-Marie’s three year current mandate ends in August 1998. He wishes to continue. The Restricted Committee requests that he present a written evaluation of what has been achieved during his mandate, and a description of his perspectives for the future. It proposes to the IC to renew jean-Marie’s mandate of three years, and calls on him to give six months notice in case of prior leave.

4) Next International Council Presidency
Doris will stop her presidency at the end of June at the latest. She recalls the decision of the last IC meeting that each board would nominate a candidate in line with the following criteria:
- a medical doctor;
- a minimum of four years experience within MSF;
- bilingual English/French;
- available at least three days a week.

It is recalled as well that the possibility for choosing a President outside the present IC is an exception for the next two years, due to the unfinished “associative” process in some sections.

Despite the discrepancies expressed during the IC September meeting, there is an agreement to stress the need for a “locomotive” to lead the IC. The function should be better defined and terms of reference will be discussed in the national boards and in the next IC meeting. Doris will send a letter to the boards accordingly.

It seems too early to decide in the March meeting, when a preliminary list of candidates proposed by the boards will be discussed. A special meeting of the IC will be organised in May, during the period of the general assemblies, where candidates will present their program and a new President can be elected accordingly.

### 5) Report from the General Directors

a) The situation in the Great lakes region is still a worry, with a number of concerns (war, massacres, human rights abuses, refugee influxes,...).

After a long period of mistrust between MSF sections, the recent Kampala meeting has hopefully hailed the beginning of a new era and the atmosphere has improved. It had been prepared by a visit to all missions in the region by A.Hamel.

The three main decisions of this meeting, forming a package deal, are: 1 HOM, “primum inter pares”, per country; 1 policy per country to be established, as well as 1 regional strategy; creation of the GLIDO (Great Lakes International Director of Operations), who will answer to the DGs. A final proposal for this experiment will be made next week in Nairobi. The RC fully supports this positive evolution.

b) The Executive Group recommends to start a new concept of campaign, inspired by the model of the landmines campaign. This kind of campaign is intended to last at least 3 years, with a view to influencing and hopefully changing the present situation. Specific resources should be allocated to it. Launching such a campaign does not mean that we stop reacting to specific events, especially on humanitarian matters, nor do that we stop working on other themes. On this occasion, MSF’s work in favour of the establishment of an International Criminal Court is presented by M.Boelaert, while P.Biberson explains the plans in France for communicating on the 50th anniversary of the declaration of human rights.

In short, we will continue to highlight our familiar themes, and take the opportunity of special events to speak of them. The campaign is a long run process and would be the “holy cow” of MSF.

The theme proposed by the Executive Group is related to the access to quality drugs. Nevertheless a special emphasis should be put on access to drugs, and the difficulties with access in poor countries. The reference point for the Executive Group would be J.M.Kindermans. The RC approves this proposal and will present it to the IC for formal approval.

c) In order to better appreciate MSF operations as a whole, 1998 country proposals are finalised in the field and collected. J.M.Piedagnel is going to analyse these documents with the help of B. Pecoul and J.M.Kindermans.
A final meeting will be held in Amsterdam on 5 and 6 March, to analyse the results and see if they are coherent with the priorities we wish to set. A common operational plan will then be presented to the IC in March.

d) The Executive Group has heard the presentation of three candidates for the post of Director of purchases. After some deliberation, it chose Eric Bertin. As first step he will define a project for common MSF purchases. This phase will have a six months duration, from 15/3/98 to 15/9/98.

e) The creation of the post of International Training Coordinator was agreed upon by the September IC meeting. There are challenges internally for human resources (defining training needs with operational departments, increasing competencies, encouraging staff to stay longer,...), and for MSF institutionally in the external collaboration, all implying the necessity for a person to be able to commit to MSF. Therefore a high profile is required. It is proposed to open this post with the main task of setting up and coordinating the third level training course -or course for heads of mission- internally and actively seeking external collaborations. This person will answer directly to the group of General Directors through the International Office. The profile will include medical background, experience of head of mission and pedagogical aptitudes.

f) A complementary text to the Chantilly paper and to the recently revised code of conduct for témoignage has been called for by many. It is recalled once again that it cannot be a guideline, but it may be a text illustrating past situations or better defining some concepts (like silent diplomacy).

It is proposed, on the basis of the outcome of the October seminar, to ask to P.Biberson to give a framework for a document clarifying the different types of témoignage, to be discussed in the next IC meeting.

g) International Newsletter: the headquarters of operational centres are not really interested in the edition of this international newsletter, while the other sections and people in the field are enthusiastic. A proposal should be made, coordinated by the international office, in the March IC meeting to go further, yet probably with other partners than the present teams responsible for “sectional” newsletters.

6) Update on commissions

- The commission on operationality has recently resumed its work, with the preparation of a questionnaire. To be complementary and in the timing of the present discussion on operationality launched by Doris and Jean-Marie, this questionnaire is being adapted and will be sent to some members of national boards.
- The commission on the expansion policy is waiting for the discussion to be held in the next IC meeting.
- The commission on jurisdiction is going to make proposals in the next IC meeting. T.Pitt will work on it, and is looking for people supporting him, especially because he won’t be able to continue after March as he has decided to leave MSF.
- The working group on ethics has not made progress so far. J.Van Schreeb is wondering about the best way to tackle this problem and whom to target.

7) Reaction to the proposal “a framework for MSF reform”

A discussion around the method for debate takes place, with different comments: should we set an operational framework or should we solve problems one by one as they arise? Some
subjects should be discussed during the mini-AG (ET, head of missions, operational policy, ...), while the question of operationality of sections, definition of an operational centre, ... should be decided upon at the level of the boards and IC, whereafter the field can be informed; the time schedule is too ambitious; some questions can be dealt with quickly, while others will take a long time to resolve.

In order to identify how we will tackle each subject, they are reviewed systematically:
- the RC wants to have an operational plan for 1999 which will be a real common plan, with priorities, choices, ... In order to reach this objective, it is ready to put resources to make progress: especially to hire a qualified person at the international level to analyse problems (differences, strategies, ...) including directly in the field and propose solutions to define a common operational plan and policy. The Executive Group is requested to come up with a proposal and a job description for the next IC meeting. This proposal should take into account the necessary participation of the partner sections.
- the role of the MSF heads of mission: the terms of reference described as “international” should be completed by the general tasks of a coordinator (animation, coordination, facilitation, ...). The RC proposes that this should be presented to the field as a decision already made (in Chantilly in 1996), which should become the rule unless exception due to the specific character of a country.
- the ET core group has considered three scenarios for the future of ET. It has proposed the second scenario in which an ET Director is nominated. The core group would be made of 2 persons per section. It has also worked on the different operational strategies. The group of General Directors supports this scenario but has asked the core group to come up with a more precise proposition for the March meeting DG/Dirop. There are certain points that need clarification before the final proposal is submitted at the next IC meeting:
  * Link the proposal to the conclusions of the ET evaluation.
  * Better define the role and responsibilities of this Director, his relation to the OD’s, his operational or regulatory function, ... Compare and harmonise these responsibilities with those of the GLIDO, as the spirit is the same.
  * Better define the ET interventions, their duration, their kind, the way it works and the right of intervention when teams already work in a country.
  * A satisfactory financial system should be worked out quickly, but is not a sine qua non condition to start “ET 2”.

The RC supports the Executive Group recommendation of creating an ET Director function. The RC insists that the ET Director must work closely and regularly with the field, on the basis of an exchange of information in view of preparing emergencies. This should be part of the discussion in the mini-AG, mostly for information of field people.

- Denationalisation of operational centres
  This subject (including such matters as the number of operational centres) is very sensitive. The RC generally thinks that it should be discussed within the boards and not in the mini-AG. The discussion in the boards should preferably take place before the discussion in the next IC meeting in March. Other propositions than the existing one should be made, as several people seem to want another scheme. A special IC meeting should be convened in September in order to take decisions with regard to this point.

- the evaluation unit should be installed quickly, according to the RC.

- the future of human resources, the role of local staff, and the question of membership should be further discussed. It is a discussion which will be held in the long-run, and which cannot have strict deadlines. It will probably be part of next mini-AG discussions. In order to
feed the discussion, it is proposed that the article written for “Contact” by A.Parisel be circulated.

- **Internationalised technical support** is encouraged by the RC and already partially in its implementation phase. There is still a problem with the humanitarian research centres. Research should be coordinated as is the case for the other sectors, for example by the International Office. Having a single MSF Foundation might contribute to that.

  JMK will try to identify somebody to work with a view to proposing a process at the next IC meeting.

- **The role of the international office** can be agreed upon quickly. The proposal for “arbitrage” should be clarified for the next meeting (its functional and not ethical character, kind of decisions involved,...).

- The definition of **what is a section** is also a sensitive issue. This is the responsibility of the various boards. A debate should be organised if possible in the boards before the next IC meeting. M.Boelaert will prepare a definition of criteria to meet in order to be associative. In addition, the criteria for autonomy including financial viability should be clarified.

- The creation of **other possible entities** has to be discussed in the boards first also and is of the same spirit.

- **The decision making bodies** and their functioning will be reviewed by T.Pitt for March. Nevertheless, some decisions depend of the outcome of the debate on denationalisation of operational centres.

In short, three specific topics have to be discussed in the boards: denationalisation of operational centres, the definition of a section, the creation of other entities.

8) The case of the Greek section

In Paris and Geneva, there were discussions with members of the Greek section, in order to define a proposal that could define the operational partnership. There are common aspects in both proposals (an exclusive partnership, a unique Director of operations, the non national or ethnic aspect of any mission).

These outlines raise comments from the RC: the role of the operational Director is seen as the vulnerable point; the opportunity to now set up such a partnership without a global framework is questioned; objections are made on the direction it leads to (this could be considered a blueprint for operationality in general).

There is no firm consensus, but an overall agreement to examine the proposal in March, seeing it as an “experiment”. Whatever proposition is made to the Greek section, by the French or Switzerland section, it should be the same proposal, having its content completed with more details (geographical or thematic limitation, monitoring, precise definition of tasks,...). P.Biberson will propose to the IC in March a clear and detailed framework agreement, prepared in collaboration with T.Durand.

Then the Greek section will choose its partner, and sign a contract with it.

9) The case of Singapore

In order to increase the private funds the Hong Kong office proposes the creation of a legal entity in Singapore, which would be an antenna of HK and would be dedicated only to private fund raising.

Objections are made: the proposal came very late; there is no global framework for the creation of a new entity; this should be a step to develop fund raising internationally; it raises
the question of growth (what sort of growth, for what purpose, ... ) of MSF, which is a wide debate.
It is proposed that this debate be held in March (P. Biberson and B. Meiman will prepare it), based on our international financial data and previsions, as a complement to the expansion policy debate. The special case of Singapore will be dealt with on this occasion.

9) Agenda for the next IC meeting

This meeting will take place in Amsterdam on 19/20/21 March.
The preliminary agenda is as follows:
1. Common operational policy and plan for 1998, including our policy on témoignage.
2. Denationalisation of operational centres.
3. The definition of a section (based on a report on the associative status of all sections prepared by M. Boelaert, and on the figures on the financial characteristics of the sections prepared by the international office).
4. Expansion policy and overall growth.
5. Update on jurisdiction.
6. The case of the Greek section.
7. Campaign theme.
8. Revised statutes of MSF-International.
The definite agenda will be decided before 12 March, and documents will be circulated in advance.

10) Mini General Assemblies

Each mini-AG will take place during two days. The first day should be used for information and debate on the subjects that are common to all mini-AGs. During the second day, subjects decided by the country teams will be discussed. Looking at the proposals already received from the field, some themes are recurrent. Although not mandatory we will include those in the list of potential subjects and some background materials.

Subjects for Day 1:
- the common operational policy focusing mainly on how our basic principles would/should influence the choice of missions in countries; the document will be a revised version of Jean-Marie’s text;
- a single head of mission in each country: why did it not happen yet? what could be the process and timeframe of implementation?
- témoignage: information on the current “policy document” and debate on what is further needed to improve our témoignage activities
- information on ET

Subjects on Day 2 (not mandatory):
- human resources: what needs to be changed in the future? The paper by Alex Parisel will serve as background document
- The ethics of our behaviour. A short background document outlining the problems will support the discussions.

A shortened and revised version of the “framework” paper will serve as background information for day 1 and also for the discussion on human resources on day 2.

Read and approved,
Date:
for MSF-Switzerland
for MSF-France

for MSF-Belgium
for MSF-Holland

for MSF-Sweden
for MSF-Spain

for MSF-Canada