Executive Committee meeting. Brussels, 20/04/99


Miscellaneous

- An executive committee will be organised every six weeks and scheduled in advance (proposed planning will follow). There will be 2 following meetings in each city to save costs. Next meeting: Wednesday May 26.

- A meeting with General Directors of all sections will take place on June 10 and 11, in order to discuss all pending issues in the relationship between operational centres and partner sections (some of them were discussed in the donor liaison group meeting in Barcelona). See with James if the IC meeting the following days has to be maintained.

- There was an agreement on the decision not to sign up on SPHERE, for the reasons explained in the preparatory document; this should not imply that we are leaving SCHR.

- The cost of the translation in Spanish of the humanitarian law dictionary will be assessed and propose for the next meeting.

Kosovo

- Comments on the situation and our operational response

We have not been very reactive nor have anticipated what happened, despite our operations in Kosovo and Albania, and our long presence in the region. We have not been able to take advantage of our accumulated experience in the past. We are no longer able to launch a mission without a full charter, nor to be opportunistic in our efforts to gain access to populations. MSF is not a major and unavoidable partner in the region. Like in Bosnia, we deal with very mobile refugees, which are not concentrated, in the heart of Europe. By consequence our work is different from what it was traditionally. We have to adapt to new circumstances and to invent other ways of intervening: there is little pure curative work, we work more with individual cases or specific diseases (diabetes, dialysis), help is needed to support host families, to support also the existing local health facilities, or to help in protecting populations.

- A weekly teleconference will be organised between General Directors, to define and adapt the positioning on political issues. The one of next week will deal with the results of the epidemiological surveys on violence and the gathering of individual “témoignages”.
- A documentation on the lack of protection of refugees in the regional host countries and especially in Albania is going to be undertaken from now on: lack of refugee status, of registration, risks of rapes, human trafficking, forced recruitment in KLA, etc. Meanwhile MSF will provide information on these concerns to the refugees locally. These concrete evidences of the lack of protection will be highlighted instead of systematically and simply denouncing UNHCR.

- A more articulated statement on the non acceptable military control and management of refugee camp should be developed (at least internally), expressing the differences between security and protection; it also necessary to recall that the reasons for the conflict are not humanitarian.

- An exploratory mission will try to go inside Kosovo under the Geneva operational centre. This mission will include Swiss and Greek volunteers, and will not be the beginning of a mission or distribution (no equipment for the exploratory mission). MSF will be ready to explain that there is no humanitarian spa in case of this likely outcome of the mission. The Brussels operational centre will try to return to Belgrade with the objectives of: renewing contacts with the Serb society, in order not to isolate the Serb population which could lead to more nationalism and radicalisation; getting a better understanding of the situation; possibly have operations for Serb population (not of great magnitude) in Serbia; monitor events in Kosovo.

- Regarding funds, the whole movement is committed to helping any operational centre, and especially Brussels which is the most at risk, in case of financial shortfall in managing the operations, due to the fact that we want to be funded by private funds.

- In order to be able to meet this objective considering the possible conflict duration up to September, sections are encouraged to develop fundraising activities for Balkans.

- Jean-Marie, together with Bruce, will monitor the financial situation and the balance between resource and expenses.

- Non NATO government institutional funds are welcome. UNHCR money, coming out mainly from NATO government, would be a hypocritical option at this time. Donor liaison officers should explain our present funding strategy, and that it will change at the moment of reconstruction. They are invited to transmit the messages highlighted above, which will be regularly adapted by General Directors.

- Contact with UNHCR will be maintained (Robert and Jean-Marie) but no letter will be sent presently. Regular contacts with ICRC, and the civilian office of NATO will also be maintained. Jean-Marie will keep the General Directors informed of the outcome.

- The MSF message will continue to be defined by Operations Directors and General Directors. Samantha will help in transmitting them externally. She will probably have to come to the International Office in Brussels in order to do this.
Follow up of GD/OpD meeting

- Debate on operational principles and co-ordination to be held between Operations Directors and during the co-days. See with James for the debate on the mission statement (as well as for the témoignage case book). Possible participation of a consultant in an executive committee meeting, as a first step to help in defining strategies by the group.

- The Geneva/Greek partnership is in a bad way, as T.Durand has resigned from his position as Operations Director of Athens. This will be discussed apart and will be transmitted to the IC.

Communication

- A global vision of communication should be proposed by Communication Directors in the next General Directors meeting with all aspects: international press officer co-ordination, regional posts, web site, etc.

- A consultant will work for Brussels in helping to improve the management of information inside the network (too much information, non-relevant information, use of email). Terms of reference will be sent to other General Directors to see if this meets their interest too and if so, the work can be expanded outside the Brussels operational centre.