Just a few words before leaving, from Philippe.

Dear all.
Thank you very much for this great moment we spent together. My thanks go especially to MM Lee, Pak, Hong and the others who have made my stay a very interesting experience.
It has been a real pleasure to meet you individually and I have full confidence in the team you have built. Thank’s Marie-Rose, I know our coming was expected with mixed feelings of hope and discomfort due to the international mess as it is. You have a difficult task here and I’m sure you are up to it.
I give you a few notes before leaving, I know I’ll be very busy back in Europe. If I can I’ll try to give you a more complete feedback.

Sorry for being too much synthetic.

1) At this time, from what we can see, there is no longer any nutritional emergency. Some areas, some populations remain in a more precarious condition but this doesn’t differ a lot from many other countries facing economic or development difficulties. The present equilibrium is dependant of:
- continuing international food aid
- next harvests
- improvement of food production (irrigation, drainage, erosion, fertilisers...)
In case of a new emergency MSF should be able to react again.
The nutritional problems of the last years have benefited from our action but the problems we see now can no longer be addressed the same way.

2) At this time there is no medical emergency in this country. No epidemic, no acute crisis in terms of “public health” (except may be at the level of infant and child nutrition). Entering in this country for the food emergency, we were presented with a real problem of shortage of essential drugs in the hospitals. Long time declining productivity plus three years of disasters have led this sector to a stand still. We decided to respond to this problem by a general and standardised distribution programme: July 97 - July 98.
We have done our best thanks to the teams but due to many problems (program definition and local constraints) we have not been up to our medical ethics. These drugs and equipment have been useful but we cannot evaluate the benefit for the populations at the level required by the enormous amount of money involved.
My opinion is that MSF must not continue on this type of programme once we have satisfied with the present contract (July 98). MSF must not extend another 6 months/ 5 MECU type of programme.

As for the general food availability, the drugs availability should be addressed by international, multi or bilateral aid. Reenforcing local production, imports and distribution capacities of this country. Emergency supply of medical items is not appropriate for medium term solution. It is very expensive, creating dependence and it is disrupting national channels of repartition.
MSF should play a role in fostering this approach rather than the present. Due to the widthness of this distribution program, MSF doctors are unable to do much more than investigative control on repartition and utilisation.

MSF has to inform and discuss with all partners from now on to make this opinion discussed widely.

For the 4 months lasting and in the 4 provinces we should strive to improve the execution of the present programme with the experience we got in the past months and identify zones and/or
populations where to concentrate our action. Concentrate on people rather than on structures. We should make proposals to the FDRC as often as we come across specific situations.

If the answer is NO, just do as much as wide as you are doing now (FDRC), then we have to say no as well. Be it on a temporary basis, but they also need a clear position from us.

If the answer is yes, then we have to prepare for many difficulties but then the callenge is up. As MSF, we have to show our compassion, our competence and our capacity to save lives, ordinary lives. The Koreans are quite open, frank and direct, let's be the same. We have nothing to loose.

In one case or the other, it will necessitate a lot of frankness between all MSF chain of decision. Good and strong decisons are required. They cannot be taken if there is no factual, fluid information or if there is a climate of lies or dissimulation.

I will do my best to have the HQ help you define clearer objectives for the future and be of a real support to the project.

Thank’s again for your “accueil” good luck. Avec mon amitié. Philippe, 17/03/98.