

HISTORICAL  
CHOICES AND  
EXPERIENCES  
OF THE  
**MDM**  
NETWORK  
SINCE  
ITS ORIGINS

Consultancy report by Gilbert Potier.

Updated 2019

*We cultivate an understanding of the world that embellishes it, that prevents us from seeing the infinite emptiness of our knowledge; in fact, our entire culture is a culture of oblivion.*

Philippe Gaucher

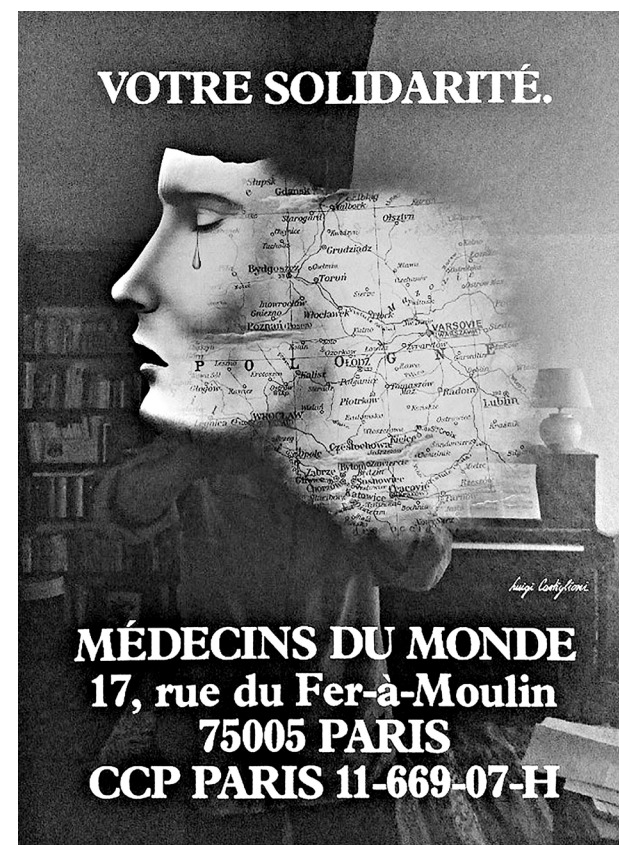
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We extend our deepest gratitude to all those members of Médecins du Monde / Doctors of the World / Médicos del Mundo who shared their reflections, concerns, and ideas during the interviews.

In particular, we sincerely thank Carolyn and Feli for all the help they provided: without them, this working document would not have been possible.

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*Doctors of the World's first action for Solidarnosc, Polish trade union federation, founded in September 1980 and directed by Lech Wałęsa, in Poland. The direction "Rue du Fér-à-Moulin - 75005 Paris" was the first headquarters of Doctors of the World in Paris.*

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# 1 Introduction

This study forms part of phase two of the Roadmap: to diagnose, discuss, and propose a model of governance designed for optimal impact, and with a globally diverse and shared leadership.

## Methodology

Fifty interviews were held with individuals from each “entity” and/or “chapter” of the Mdm International Network (NET or network). A selection of key personnel was carried out by the consultant in conjunction with the ID & Governance group chairs and the NET director.

All Mdm chapters were invited to participate in this study.

Replies were received from most chapters. Interviews were conducted with 19 current general directors and presidents, and 30 board members of International boards of chapters, as well as with founders and past presidents. In total, 13 chapters are represented by the interviewees.

All interviewees received a questionnaire that served as a framework for the interview.

Most interviews were conducted via Skype. Some respondents preferred to submit written responses to the questions, while others sent additional written contributions following their interviews. Ten interviews were held with

respondents in person who happened to be in Paris for professional reasons.

A small number of members (less than five from the list) did not respond to the request for an interview.

The collection and in-depth analysis of historical documents and available archives were mainly carried out in the International Network Head Office in Paris (Direction du Réseau International, or DRI). Each chapter was also invited to provide documents relevant to its geographic area.

“Basecamp” is a repository for all documents quoted in this study.

## Acronyms

BBP	Board Best Practice
BC	Basecamp
BR	Bureau of Representation (see Representation Office)
DOTW	Doctor of the World (UK/USA)
DRI	Direction du Réseau International (International Network Head Office)
ED	Executive Director
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
IBD	International Board of Directors
ID	International Delegation*
IEC	International Executive Committee
IS	International Secretariat
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MDM	Médecins du Monde/Médicos del Mundo/Doctors of the World
MdM NET	Network Empowerment Team
RO	Representation Office
VMV	Vision, Mission and Values

### \* INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION:

AR	Argentina
BE	Belgium
CA	Canada
CY	Cyprus
FR	France
DE	Germany
GR	Greece
HK	Hong Kong
HU	Hungary
IN	India
IT	Italy
JP	Japan
KE	Kenya
LU	Luxembourg
MX	Mexico
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
ES	Spain
SE	Sweden
CH	Switzerland
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

## Important note

The different MdM “International Delegations” are variously referred to as “chapters” or “entities”.

The term “International Delegation” was used for several years during meetings of the MdM International Network, prior to the launch of the Roadmap process in December 2015.

Similarly, minutes of the International Board used the term “representation office” or “bureau of representation” interchangeably.

Quotes taken from the minutes of meetings use the exact term as written in the minutes. In the narrative, the term “entity” is used only when the office was not yet a “chapter”.

Prior to the advent of the Roadmap, “MdM International Network” was the term used for the Network. Following the Roadmap, the Network was known as the “International Network of MdM”. In Montreal in 2017, another term, “MdM NET” was used to refer to the “MDM Network Empowerment Team”, which is the support team that was set up to help achieve the objectives set out in the Roadmap.







# 2. Concise chronology of the development of the Mdm International Network

## PHASE I 1991-1995

### Launch, Construction & Recognition of others chapters

#### CHAPTERS AND/OR ENTITIES IN THIS PHASE

Eight chapters. French leadership.

By the mid- 90's, there were eight chapters: United States, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, Belgium, Cyprus and Italy<sup>1</sup>.

Mdm US joined at the end of 1987; Mdm Greece during this period also.

#### GOVERNANCE MODEL

Before 1991, there was no official International Network or governance, although international meetings were held by Mdm France. Volunteers returning from the field were strongly encouraged to set up new Mdm entities in their own countries<sup>2</sup>.

In 1991, the Mdm International Network was launched.

Governance was shared among all the Community of Presidents of the various International Delegations: "One chapter, one vote". While Mdm FR led the Network, the principal decision-making at governance level was carried out by the community.

A new committee of executive directors (EDs) was established.

#### DRIVERS OF CHANGE

During this period, a situation linked with moral values<sup>3</sup> arose. Also, the necessity for strong coordination and communication to consolidate the

global influence of the Mdm identity was recognised. Other very important factors were the need to design the first logo, as well as to define the brand<sup>4</sup>.

#### MILESTONE

In 1995, the Ethics Charter was drawn up. This defined the duties of Network members, and included a conflict resolution mechanism (an ethics committee to deal with disputes<sup>5</sup>.)

Also, the mutual recognition of the entities as members of the Network took place.

<sup>1</sup> By order of formation. Mdm Italy had also been set up, but tensions between Rome and Milan over the location of HQ meant that members of this entity were not often present.

<sup>2</sup> The 1990 Krakow Charter spirit: "the principle of non-interference ceases to apply where there is a risk of failure to provide assistance".

<sup>3</sup> Five years previously, Mdm Poland had aligned itself with Pope John Paul II in opposition to free and legal abortion. Mdm Poland had in fact withdrawn from the Mdm Network (1989).

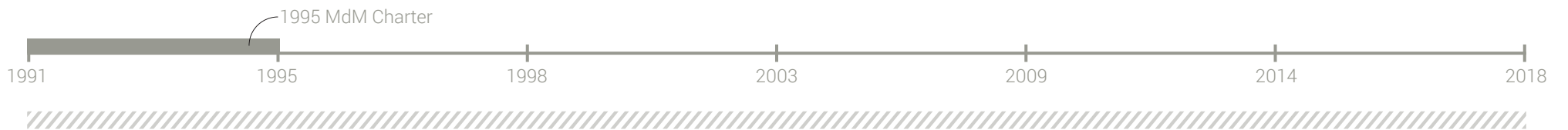
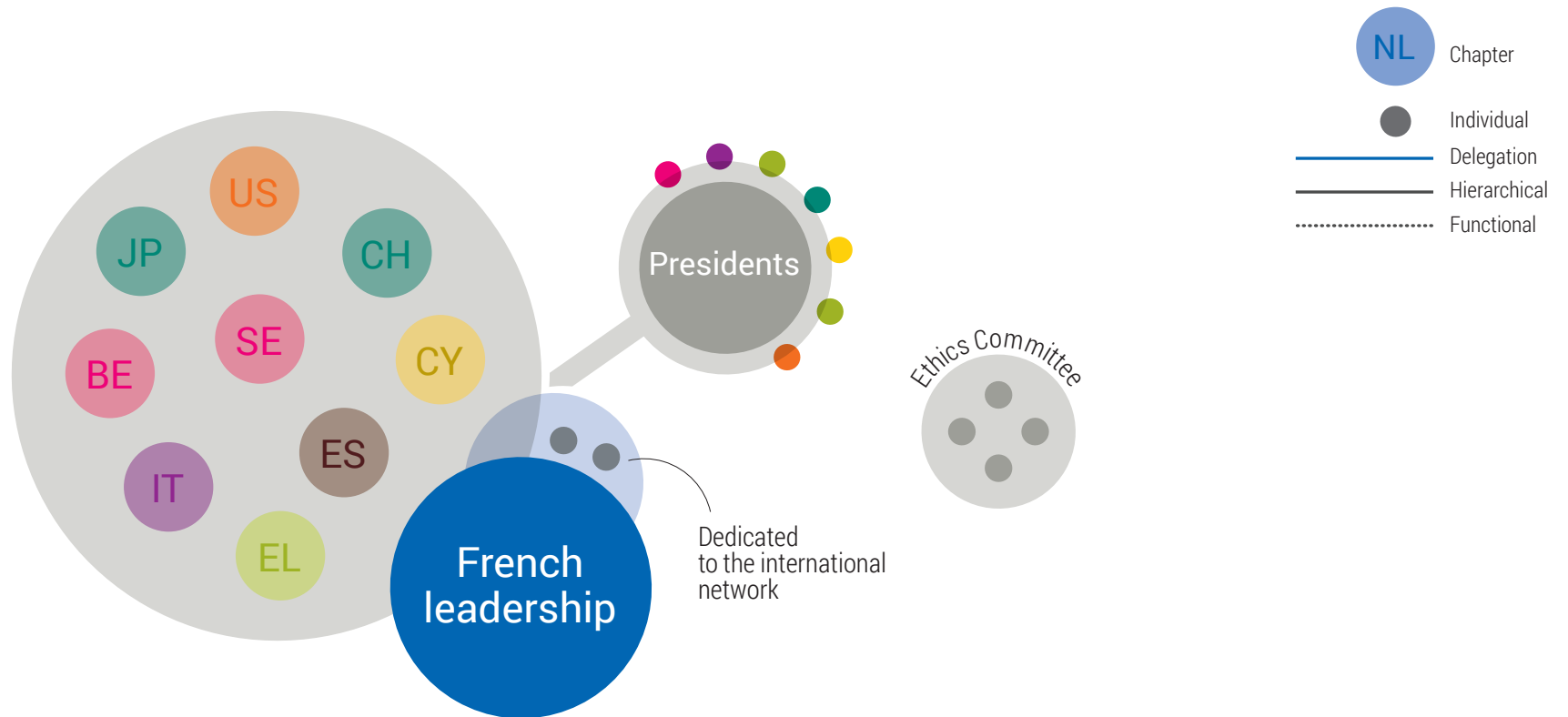
<sup>4</sup> In 1993, the board of Mdm France began negotiations with Bernard Kouchner, founder and former president of Mdm, and owner of the brand.

<sup>5</sup> 1995 Ethic Chart draft: reference in Basecamp that emphasizes the will of the Network and disseminates its spirit of care and testimony.



# Launch, Construction & Recognition

1991-1995



# PHASE II 1996-1998

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## Formalization: Establishing Rules

### CHAPTERS AND/OR ENTITIES IN THIS PHASE

Eleven delegations and tree entities. French leadership.

Delegations: France, United States, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Cyprus, Canada, Switzerland, Argentina and Belgium.

Entities: Netherlands, United Kingdom and Japan.

### GOVERNANCE MODEL

The MdM International Network continued to define its governance, including a support structure<sup>6</sup> with the following characteristics:

- An International Board comprising the president of each delegation: "One delegation, one vote".
- Twice-yearly International Board Meetings, with a general secretary in charge of coordinating the Network.
- An International Executive Committee (IEC), with an international coordinator (who was a former president).
- The international secretariat.

Pierre Laurent, a general secretary of the Network, was appointed, based in Paris.

### DRIVERS OF CHANGE<sup>7</sup>

The registry of the brand. Also, the need to coordinate security in international programmes in conflict countries.

### MILESTONE

MDM International was recognised as a "member of international advisory status" authorised to attend the United Nations General Assembly<sup>8</sup>.

During the 1997 meeting in Stockholm, the internal rules of the MdM International Network were approved.

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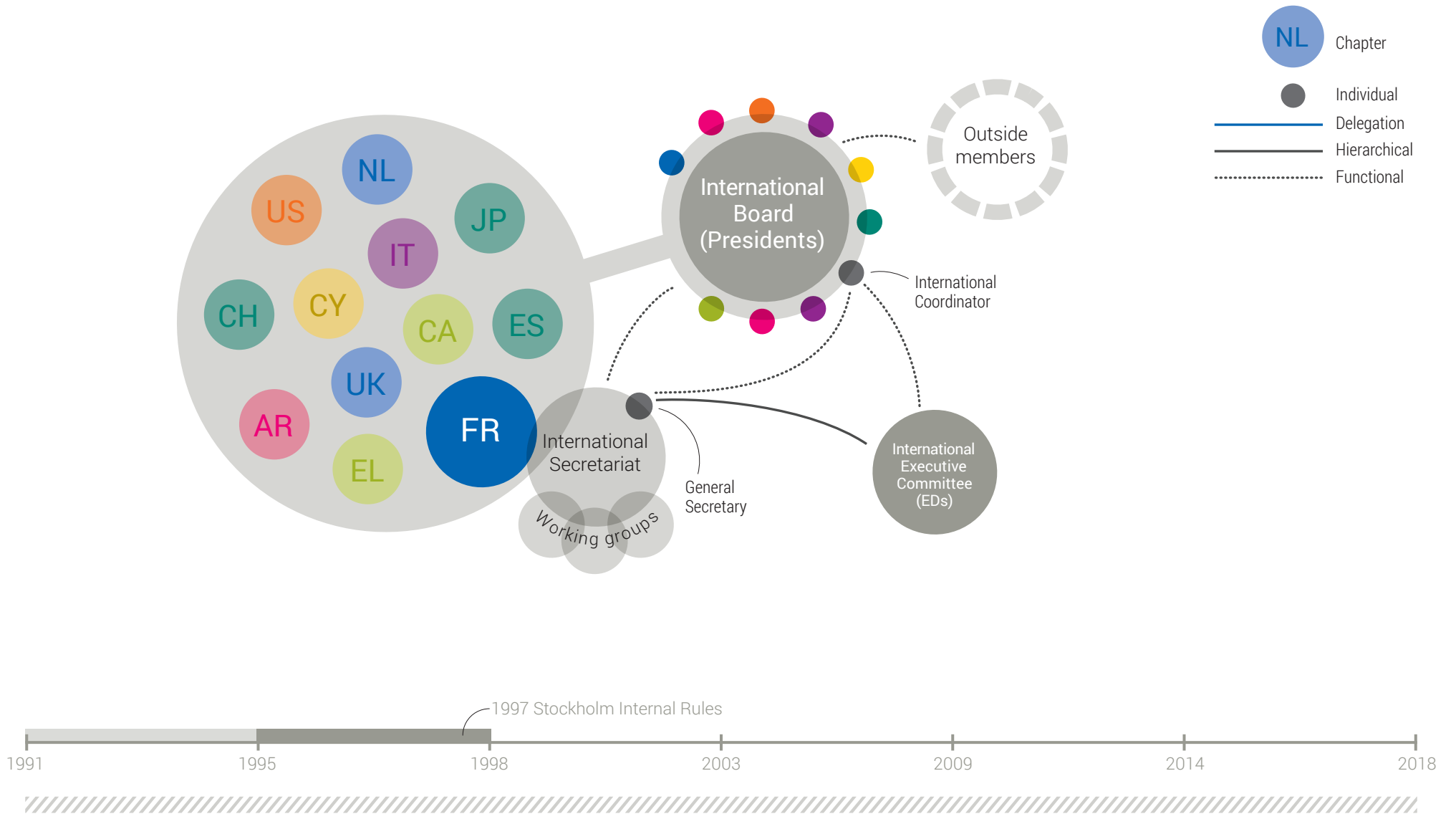
<sup>6</sup> All MdM delegations approved the document during a joint meeting held in Stockholm in 1997; see the document International Rules Network of Stockholm of June 2006. It also appears in Basecamp.

<sup>7</sup> The MdM logo was initially red. After an official request from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the MdM International Network members worked together to devise the new logo. It was agreed that each chapter had the right to include the MdM name in the official national language. This demand came from MdM Spain, which already had a strong national representation.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations International advisory status continues to be recognized to the present day.

# Establishing Rules

1996-1998



# PHASE III 1999-2003

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## Coordination & Informal Productivity

### CHAPTERS/ENTITIES IN THIS PHASE

Twelve chapters and four entities. French leadership.

Chapters: United States, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland, Cyprus, Canada, Argentina, Belgium, Portugal.

Entities: Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan<sup>9</sup>.

### GOVERNANCE MODEL

The International Executive Board continued to refine its internal regulations.

In 2003, governance was shared by a board<sup>10</sup> comprising:

- Four presidents – first FR, ES, AR, and CY; followed by CH, CA, BE, and CH.

- One International Network coordinator (a past president).

- One general delegate (chosen from among the four presidents).

- One general secretary (without a vote).

### DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Financial difficulties (France and Sweden); tensions in field coordination (Iraq); and fraud allegations in flawed elections (Greece and Cyprus).

### MILESTONE

The International Executive Board (validated in 2006) was the first attempt at power-sharing between entities at different levels of growth.

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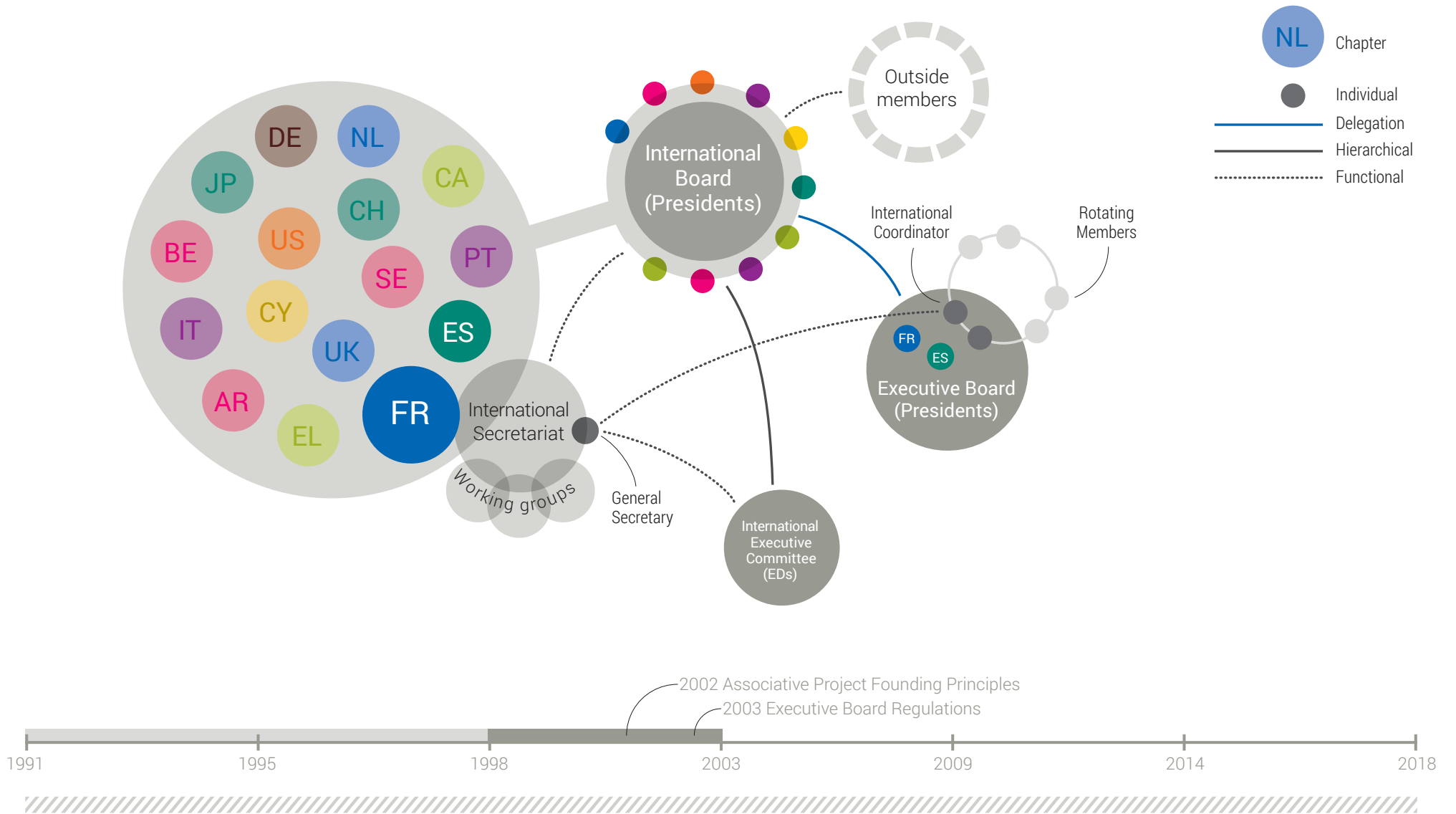
<sup>9</sup> Following a change in Mdm France's Board of Representation policy, these countries were granted the right to run domestic programmes and to receive support to enable financial autonomy.

<sup>10</sup> Three presidents (the fourth acted as general delegate) the coordinator and general delegate were in charge of Network management and supervision on ethical, political, legal, and economic levels. The general delegate was in charge of following up on decisions taken by the Executive Board. The International secretary was in charge of Network communication, operational coordination, HR, and the support of the development of small delegations. The International executive board met every two months. The new board was to evaluate the new governance model every six months.

NOTE: Italy was not really successful as a delegation due to tensions between doctors that were already members of the Italian organization, as well as over competition concerning the HQ location: Rome or Milan.

# Coordination & Informal Productivity

1999-2003



# PHASE IV 2004-2008

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## Managing Risks

### CHAPTERS/ENTITIES IN THIS PHASE

Twelve chapters and four entities. French leadership.

Chapters: United States, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland, Cyprus, Canada, Argentina, Belgium, Portugal.

Entities: Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany, Japan.

### GOVERNANCE MODEL

The International Board continued to operate under the same rules. However, in 2006<sup>11</sup> a new committee of executive directors (EDs) was established.

The purpose of the ED committee was:

- To provide technical answers to questions from

Network members.

- To coordinate financial flows.
- To prevent tensions and possible conflict between the programmes of the various delegations in the field.
- To manage thematic working groups at the request of the International Board.

On behalf of this committee, the International Secretary was involved in:

- Field coordination, especially during emergencies.
- Inter-delegation communication campaigns for the Network.
- Coordination and fundraising, and the search for new donors.
- Reporting the financial flows between Network

entities.

### DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Coordination in the field (Zimbabwe<sup>12</sup> and Palestine<sup>13</sup>).

### MILESTONE

The two main decision-making communities at governance level were established: the Presidents committee, and the Executive Directors committee.

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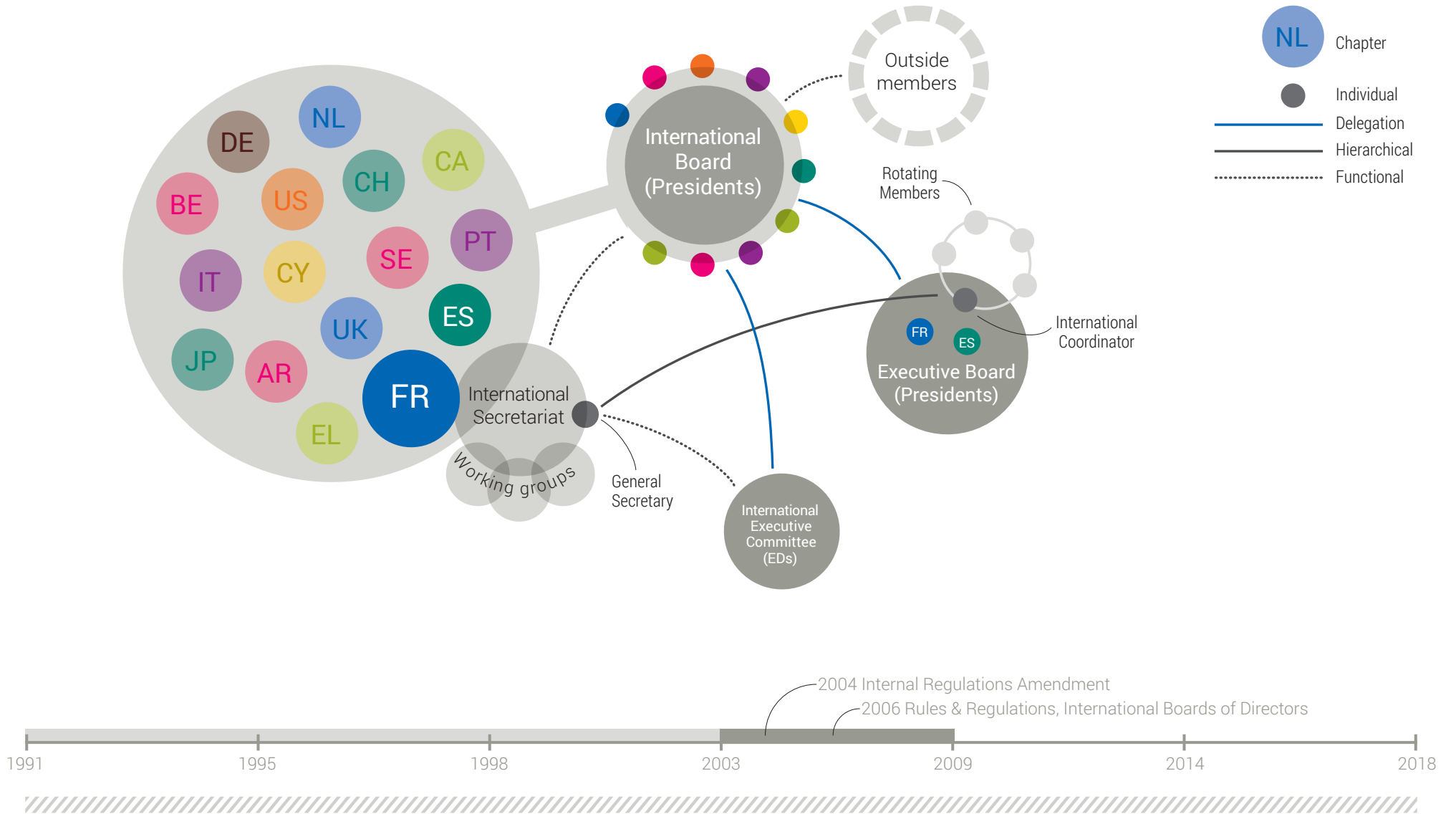
<sup>11</sup> See the document Rules and regulations International Board of Directors of May 2006. It also appears in Basecamp.

<sup>12</sup> See the document Organigram PRGM Governance of October 2003. It appears also in Basecamp.

<sup>13</sup> See the document Integrated Framework Project Palestine, Draft of May/November of 2005. It also appears in Basecamp.

# Managing Risks

2004-2008



# PHASE V 2009-2014

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## Restoring confidence

### CHAPTERS/ENTITIES DURING THIS PHASE

French and Spain leadership.

Chapters and entities: France, United States, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Switzaerland, Cyprus, Canada, Argentina, Belgium, Portugal, Netherlands, Unitd Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg.

### GOVERNANCE MODEL

The governance model remained the same; it began to fail.

In January 2009, the general secretary updated The *MdM International Network Rules and Regulations*,<sup>14</sup> which were presented during the Network's general assembly in Madrid.

Since 2008, there had been major political differences between the executive board and two entities (MdM CY and MdM US). In 2009, the dispute ended. Each entity created a new association in its own country<sup>15</sup>.

### DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Harmonisation and coordination of chapters in the field.

Tensions and disputes during emergencies required new structural means to resolve conflicts.

### MILESTONES

The Haiti earthquake and the failure of emergency coordination<sup>16</sup> for nine chapters.

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<sup>14</sup> See the document *Internal Rules and Regulations of January 2009*. It also appears in Basecamp.

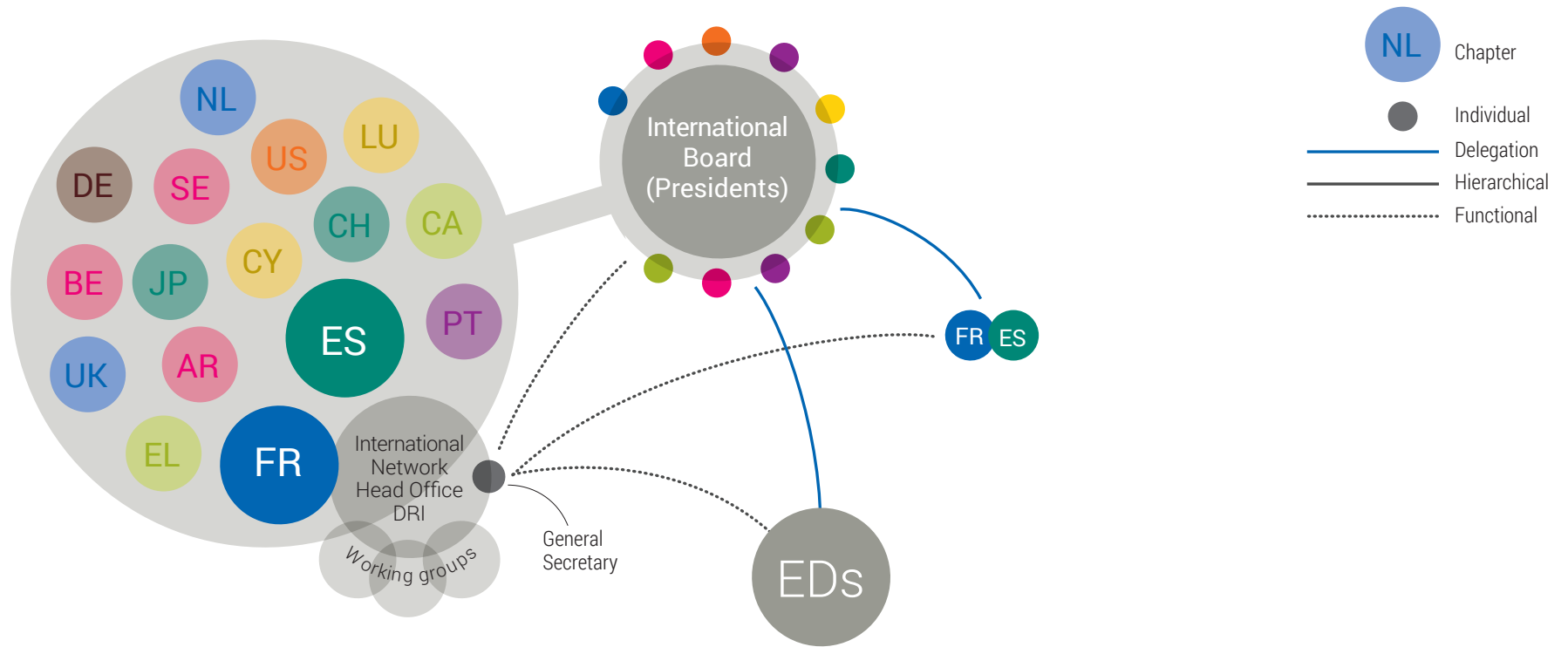
<sup>15</sup> The withdrawal of the trademark license was threatened for the third time, something that was often evoked during meetings. Past experience, however, demonstrated that the split with Cyprus and the US was not really about brand licensing, but rather about ethics and operational divergence.

<sup>16</sup> In 2006, amid tensions during the field crisis in Iraq, an Emergency Protocol was established. See the document *Network Emergency Protocol of November 2006*. It also appears in Basecamp. After Haiti, in 2011 MdM FR and MdM ES set up a new steering group on the Network's emergency protocol.



# Restoring Confidence

2009-2014



# PHASE VI 2015-2018

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## Co-Construction: The Roadmap Process

### CHAPTERS/ENTITIES ON THIS PHASE

16 chapters.

France, United States, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Canada, Argentina, Belgium, Portugal, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Germany, Luxembourg, Japan and Turkey.

### GOVERNANCE MODEL

In 2009, the leadership of MdM France and MdM Spain during emergencies was validated by the chapters.

### DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The need to develop a common language to define Vision, Values, and Mission.

During the 2014 MdM France general assembly, the new associative project was widely approved<sup>17</sup>.

This associative project of MdM France was presented before the general assembly of Médicos del Mundo, which approved its values.

At the general assembly of the MdM International Network in Madrid, the presidents met and took the decision to work on the values of the Network.

### MILESTONE

The new phase<sup>18</sup> (following the Roadmap) to assess and design a governance model for the International Network.

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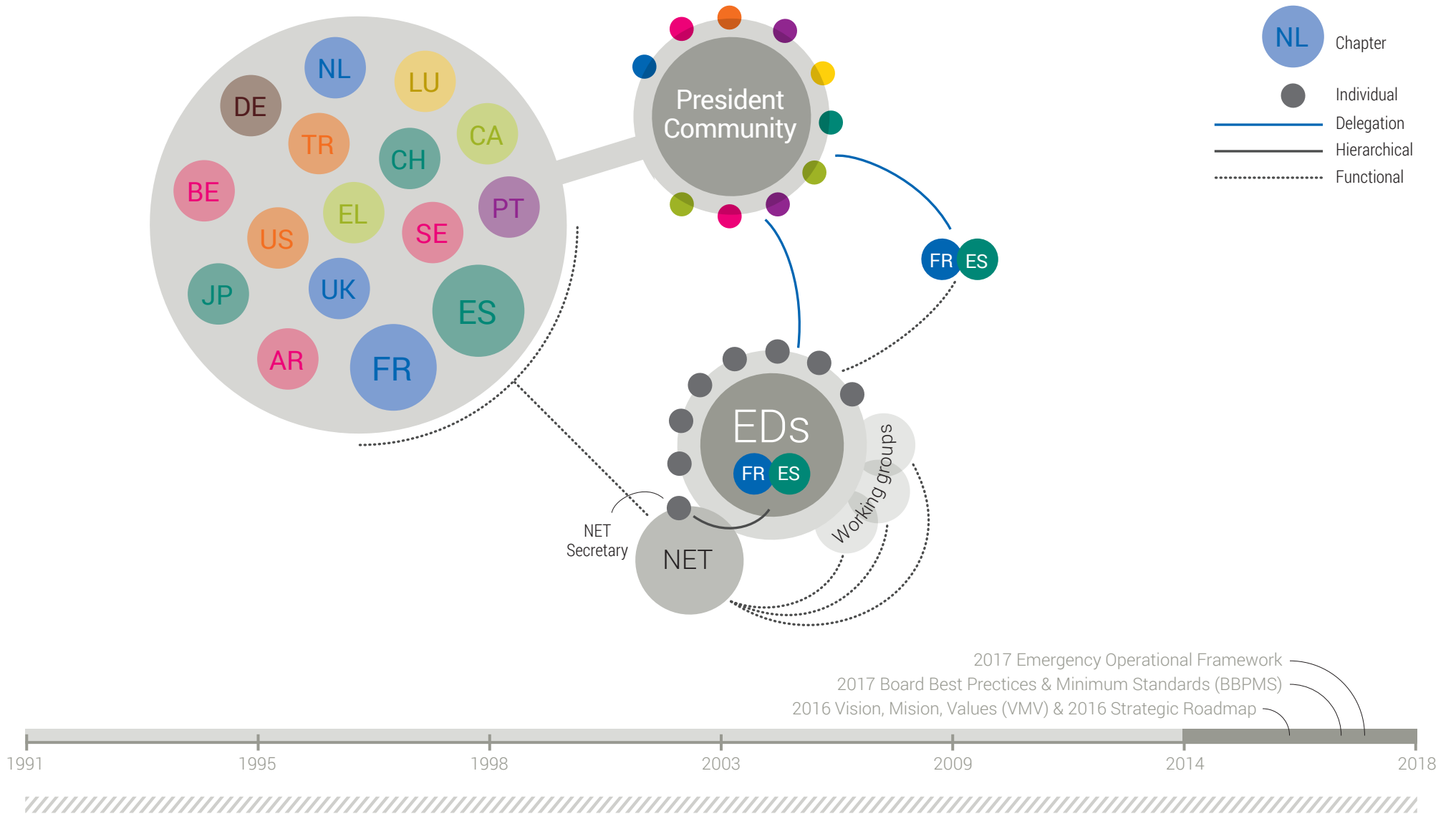
<sup>17</sup> This Associative Project contained an International Network element with the general objective: "to increase the global influence of Doctors of the World". Other objectives included:

- Build a model of democratic and dynamic governance
- Develop new forms of citizen mobilization; common advocacy; quality; pooling of fundraising (for programmes of Network associations)".

<sup>18</sup> A process of Network assessment was launched after the June 2015 London meeting. In December 2015, the Roadmap of the International Network was born. In 2016, the results of this process and the Roadmap were presented and voted for during the Paris Network general assembly, which approved the values, visions, and missions (VVM) of the International Network. In 2017 at a working group meeting held in London, this component was finalised. In Montreal during the 2017 general assembly, the board best practice and minimum standards were established.

# Co-Construction

2015-2018







# 3. How and why each entity was created

There were three phases in the development of entities.

The first phase began in 1978, when Bernard Kouchner, together with a group of prominent intellectuals, launched the mobilisation of civil society. After MdM France, the next chapter to be created was MdM USA, in 1987, with Jonathan Mann (former head of the World Health Organization's global AIDS programme).

In the following ten years, seven founder entities (FR, ES, GR, CY, US, SE, CH) established:

- An International Humanitarian Charter
- A set of internal regulations
- An International Secretariat

The MdM International Network was subsequently reinforced by the formation of three more International Delegations: (BE, IT, CA).

The second phase began in 1997, when MdM decided to create (like Médecins Sans Frontières France) the representation office.

The purpose of these offices was to carry out activities on behalf of the delegations, including:

- Fundraising (both public and private).
- Recruitment of volunteers for international programmes.
- Relaying the communication of the partner International Delegation.

Between 1997 and 2000, MdM FR created several representation offices (NL, UK, BE, DE, JP). MdM ES also created a representation office (MdM PT), although this quickly became a delegation.

From 2002, difficulties emerged among these offices: fundraising was not very efficient, there was limited recruitment of volunteers, and the running costs were high. During a meeting of the MdM International Network, a decision was thus taken to make a distinction between a delegation (with the right to vote) and a representation office (without the right to vote)<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> In 2002, for example, on the MdM International Network meeting agenda was:

“Point 1: Confirmation of three potential delegations:

After having heard a report on its operation from each of the delegations and from the International coordinator who had just visited them, it was decided:

- to restore MdM Belgium (representative office since 1999) and MdM Italy (since 1993) to the rank of confirmed International delegation, hence with the right of vote
- to maintain MdM Sweden (since 1991) in its present status for a year”.

The three entities mentioned previously each had a different status at that time:

- MdM Belgium was a representation office, although it had been implementing domestic programmes for many years and was thus keen to be a fully-fledged part of the MdM movement.
- MdM Italy was working to resolve constant tensions between members (Rome and Milán) and to decide the board's composition, and the location of its HQ.
- MdM SE was an International delegation

In 2005, the International Network decided to change this policy<sup>20</sup> given the strong will of several representation offices to become independent. The Network encouraged the offices to implement domestic programmes and to be financially autonomous. The International secretariat offered support to these entities. There was an annual meeting of the Network, and the chapters decided upon the host country; the location was not always the same.

### **BRAND CREATION, REGISTRY, AND USE**

MdM FR owned the brand since 1996. For a year and half, it conducted bilateral legal work with all entities of the MdM International Network. At the end of 1996, all the International Delegations signed the brand licensing agreement with the parent company, MdM FR.

In 2002, the future basis of the revised internal rules was launched just before a Network meeting held in New York<sup>21</sup>.

The withdrawal of the trademark licence was often threatened during meetings. Past experience, however, demonstrated that the split with MdM CY and MdM US was not really about brand licensing, but rather ethics and operational divergence.

Similarly, when MdM FR and MdM AR encountered strong political divergence, problems of ethics and management came first. The same observation was also made following the support provided to MdM PT after it experienced financial difficulties.

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<sup>20</sup> See the document International Meeting MdM Network Paris of April 2005. It also appears in Basecamp.

<sup>21</sup> In a letter sent to all Network entities in January 2002, Jacky Mamou, president of MdM France, sent a draft of French proposals concerning the internal rules of the Network. This letter stated that the link between the Network entities and MdM France were twofold in nature:  
"1- The legal basis, through the license agreement will solely require from the International delegations that they strictly respect Médecins du Monde graphic charter on their national territory, according to the principles defined at the Cyprus International committee."  
"2- The following proposals attempt to provide answers to implement this second imperative requirement. Obviously though, they can only be a first step toward the challenge of setting up our International structure. First of all, these rules are made to evolve. The factual context will most probably lead us to readjust them and give them a more formal legal basis. Furthermore, these proposals do not bring answers to many challenges which will face us in the future, such as enlargement to southern countries or those of central and Eastern Europe".

# 4. Collection of core documents

To determine what can be considered a core documents for the Network, a list of criteria has been established. In the table below, there are some comments on these documents.

DOCUMENTS/ CRITERIA	MICHEL FOUCAULT TEXT	KRAKOW CHARTER OF HUMANITARIAN AID	MDM FR PRESIDENT JACQUES LEBAS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED MDM INTERNATIONAL NETWORK	ETHICS CHARTER DRAWN UP AFTER MEETING HELD IN NEUFCHÂTEL, FRANCE	THE ASSOCIATIVE PROJECT, NAMED: "THE ASSOCIATION PROJECT FOUNDING PRINCIPLES".
BUILDING PROCESS		X	X	X	X
CRITICAL MASS	X	X	X	X	
STATEMENT (VALUES, IDENTITY, CULTURE)	X	X	X	X	X
SELF-DESCRIPTIVE DOCUMENT		X		X	X
REFERENCED IN OTHER DOCUMENTS	X	X		X	X
VALIDATION	X	X		X	X
CHAPTERS INVOLVED	FR/US/GR/ES/SE/IT/CH/CY/CA/NL/UK/AR/BE/GE/PT/JP	FR/US/GR/ES	FR	FR/US/GR/ES/SE/IT/CH/CY	FR





DATE AND NAME OF FILE IN BASECAMP	ABSTRACT
1981_MICHEL FOUCAULT'S_TEXT OF	This text was read out in Geneva to announce the creation of the International committee against piracy to defend the boat people.
1990_03_31_CHARTER OF HA_A4_FR_EN_ES	On 31 March 1990, Doctors of the World, along with doctors gathered in Krakow, contributed to the adoption of a European Charter of Humanitarian Aid, according to which "the principle of non-interference ceases to apply where there is a risk of failure to provide assistance".
1991_01_10_INT NW_LEBASJ	First beginnings of the MdM International Network. J LEBAS, chairman of MdM FR, sent a letter to "150 international correspondents" to allow them to create a Network. This launch was based on the themes of: human rights, humanitarian action, and AIDS.
1995_11_ETHIC CHART_DRAFT_V95	First Ethics Charter, which defined the duties of Network members, and included a conflict resolution mechanism and the necessary criteria to follow in order to be a delegation of the MdM International Network.
2002_01_01_ASSOCIATIVE-PROJECT_6P	<p>This undated French draft (perhaps from the end of 2001 or beginning of 2002) appeared to be the first attempt to define the MdM International Network.</p> <p>It alluded to: Identity, Commitment, Advocacy, and Independence (political, financial) and to our choice of programmes: "We are looking for donors for programmes, and not only to be providers of "normalised" services."</p> <p>It also mentioned a strategy: to define what is a crisis for MdM, and what are our priorities for 2002:</p> <p>AIDS and conflicts (DRC and Equatorial Guinea)</p> <p>Aids and prevention: Tanzania, CAR and Ethiopia (PMTCT)</p> <p>Emergencies and crises: Afghanistan, Liberia, Pakistan, Bolivia, etc.</p>

The first core document of the MdM International Network launched in 1991 was the Krakow Charter (1990). This was followed by the text of Michel Foucault that was read out at the Geneva conference against piracy (1981).

To be considered as such, core documents must

have been present or referred to during the Network construction process (such as with the Krakow Charter, for example).

A core document must contain a statement that makes reference to the values, identity, and culture of the MdM International Network and its aims.

Further criteria that identify a core documents are whether it had been validated by other chapters, or whether other chapters were involved in its elaboration.







# 5. Conclusions and challenges: the road ahead

This section constructs and documents a collective narrative to relate the history of MdM International Network governance. It follows the development of the story right to the present day. It is the foundation for the execution and design of future Network governance.

**1991** **The launch of the MDM International Network.** A letter sent by MdM France was the foundation of what would become the MdM International Network.<sup>22</sup>

**1993** **“One chapter, one vote”.** MdM International Network really got under way<sup>23</sup>. Regular meetings of the presidents of the international chapters were held in the different countries of the Network.

Six chapters formed the core of the International Network: FR, USA, ES, GR, SE, and CH.

The presidents of the respective countries had strong personalities, and were very often involved in politics. Every chapter had a voice, and majority decisions were arrived at following the “One chapter, one vote” method.

**1993-94** **The MdM logo graphic charter** was the first common discussion among the MdM International Network<sup>24</sup>.

**1995** **The Ethics Charter was the first official document of the MdM International Network.** It defined the criteria for Network members and referred to the 1990 Krakow Charter<sup>25</sup>. The Ethics Charter was drawn up in Neufchâtel.

A new Chapter was created: C nada. Italy was not really successful as a delegation due to tensions

between doctors that were already members of the Italian organisation, as well as over competition concerning the HQ location: Rome or Milan.

**1996** **MdM France became brand owner** It was a crucial moment for the MdM International Network. After several months of negotiations, Bernard Kouchner, founder of MdM, consented to return the brand ownership to MdM FR. MdM FR subsequently initiated bilateral meetings with all the chapters to conclude a memorandum to define the use of brand licensing.

**1997** **The Internal Rules of the MdM International Network** were approved during a joint meeting of MdM chapter presidents held in Stockholm. Governance was assured by an International Board comprising the presidents of each delegation: FR, US, GR, ES, SE, IT, CH, CY, CA, NL.

<sup>22</sup> The letter proposed the exchange of information between people who would be watchdogs on “...human rights, AIDS and humanitarian actions in your country.” It also suggested reporting in a monthly letter called “The Doctors of the World Letter”, and sought to gather, “people interested in this movement and who would approve the Doctors of the World Charter”.

<sup>23</sup> Key people involved in the implementation of the Network were Bernard Granjon, president of MdM France 1993-1996, and two rivals, Vicky Sharp, president of MdM US 1993-1996, and Pilar Est banez, president of MdM Spain 1993-1996.

<sup>24</sup> The MdM logo was red initially. The International Committee of the Red Cross urged the association to modify it due to its similarity to the Red Cross logo. Blue was subsequently chosen. It was also decided that the white dove would look to the right and not to the left. Each chapter was to have the right to include the name of Doctors of the World in its official national language.

<sup>25</sup> On 31 March 1990, Doctors of the World, along with doctors gathered in Krakow, contributed to the adoption of a European Charter of Humanitarian Aid, according to which “the principle of non-interference ceases to apply where there is a risk of failure to provide assistance”.

The International Board met twice a year. A general secretary based in Paris was in charge of Network coordination.

Important features and standards to be decided upon included:

- An International Executive Committee.
- *One chapter, one vote.*
- The international secretariat.
- The definition of a “delegation”.
- Working together in the field
- Joint communication

**2001** **Self-evaluation** was carried out by each chapter (nine in total, excluding MDM FR). The main purpose of this comprehensive exercise was to introduce transparency and to compare the development of all delegations using the same tools and criteria.

**2002** **First common MDM International Network programme against AIDS.** There was coordination and partnership between MDM US, ES, and FR for this programme in Zimbabwe.

**2004** **End of the first model of governance.** The difficulties of the decision-making process, as well as communication and programme-sharing, were analysed. A strong will to share power between smaller and larger delegations (for example, FR, GR, and ES) was expressed.

The International Network was composed of:

- Four presidents: first FR, ES, AR, CH; followed by, FR, ES, CH, CA; then FR, ES, BE, CH and CA then BE.
- One general delegate (one of the four presidents).

- One International Network coordinator (chosen from past presidents).
- One general secretary.

Three presidents (the fourth acted as general delegate) and the international Network coordinator were responsible for the management and supervision of the Network in terms of ethical, political, legal, and economic considerations.

The general delegate oversaw the follow-up of the decisions taken by the board.



The International secretary was responsible for:

- Network communication, operational coordination, HR.
- Support of the development of small delegations.

This new entity met every two months. The new board was to evaluate the new governance model every six months.

**2005** **A meeting of the Mdm International Network** in Paris clearly defined:

- What is a delegation?
- What is a bureau of representation?

This meeting officially granted “the right to open domestic missions so that they could show their association capacities, as a prelude to their possible accession to the status of full delegation”<sup>26</sup>.

**2008** **Kidnapping of two filed staffs (one from Japan, one from Netherlands) in Ethiopia shocked Mdm community.** There was a ransom demand; liberation came a few months later. There was a strong crisis within the Network, and much discussion about the application of security rules in countries where risks were greatest. MDM FR and Mdm ES took the lead on emergencies and crisis situations.

**2008** **Dispute between the executive board and two entities: Mdm CY and Mdm US.** Major political differences concerning field operations led to conflict.

**2009** **Mdm FR, in conjunction with Mdm Spain**<sup>27</sup> proposed:

- That each delegation be responsible for its own proper security rules. A vote of the committee of presidents approved this decision.

- The reorganisation of the International secretariat, which became the DRI, with a director to be part of the HQ staff in Paris. The running costs of the Network were shared between Madrid HQ and Paris HQ. A salaried member of the DRI worked in Madrid.

There was a split in the Mdm International Network: Mdm US and Mdm CY left Mdm and the Mdm Network. Each entity went on to create a new association in its own country<sup>28</sup>.

**2010** **Haiti earthquake a major milestone in the regulation and coordination of the Mdm International Network.** Nine delegations were in the field at the beginning. A new DRI coordination set-up functioned in Haiti for two years. However, six years later, there were five chapters cooperating within one common programme, and five other different programmes with separate coordination.

<sup>26</sup> 2005 meeting of the MDM International Network in Paris.

<sup>27</sup> 2013 meeting held in Brussels about security concerns (Olivier Bernard was president of Mdm FR, and Álvaro González president of Mdm ES).

<sup>28</sup> This was the third time that withdrawal of the trademark license was threatened, something that was often evoked in meetings. However, past experience proved that the split with Mdm US and Mdm CY was never about brand licensing, but rather ethics and operational divergence.

**2012-2013** During the annual MdM International Network meetings in Madrid and Brussels, the operational reality of the Network was questioned. A new protocol on emergencies was launched by the Network.

**2014** **The MdM International Network discussed the values of the Network during the general assembly.** Mdm BE joined the Network working group on emergency protocol.

**2015** **Launch of the Roadmap.** The new phase of co-construction began.

**2016** **Values, Vision, Mission were approved** during the Mdm International Network meeting in Paris.

**2017** **Board best practices and minimum standards** were voted in during the annual meeting of the Network in Montreal.

Throughout these interviews and the in-depth analyses of historical documents and available archives, we have tried to emphasise some key weaknesses that have prevented Mdm from realising its full potential.

The collective narrative of the growth and development of Mdm International governance brings us to a new starting point today. As we consider the design of future Network governance, we must ask: why were we not always entirely successful in achieving all of our objectives, and what are the lessons learnt?

From the beginning, the purpose of creating an International Network was<sup>29</sup>:

- To give an international voice to Mdm.
- To act in local volunteer recruitment.
- To establish a common fundraising policy before donors.
- To implement a coherent communication strategy.
- To ensure the efficient and optimal coordination of our actions on an international scale

None of these five objectives has been reached. Nevertheless, the Network has produced some key documents and protocols whose analysis can shed light on some key weaknesses.

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<sup>29</sup> Stockholm international committee, June 1997

## FIRST KEY WEAKNESS: FOLLOW-UPS

For 35 years the chapters have worked on the structuring of the Network. From the beginning *Internal rules* were established, which were written and approved in 1997, then regularly updated. There were two major changes to Network governance with the formation of the International executive board (IEC) in 2005, and the executive committee of the executive directors in 2006. However, findings and lessons learnt from past experiences were not effectively internalised or communicated throughout the Network.

In 2005, among reasons given for the change were<sup>30</sup>:

- An inefficient decision-making process (lack of speed).
- An executive secretariat bound by over-restrictive terms of reference, and lacking in authority.

The new board was to evaluate the new governance model every six months; this never happened. The governance model was renewed for four years without assessment.

These rules were intended to work as a common tool to mediate tensions among chapters, but they never fulfilled this function.

## SECOND KEY WEAKNESS: COORDINATION OF FIELD OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

In 2000, the first emergency rules were formulated, and six emergency protocols<sup>31</sup> were established. The interviewees seemed to be totally unaware of these protocols and their application. One exception was the Haiti coordination team, which was the last coordination team set up by the general secretariat. The major finding of the evaluation of field operations was the necessity of strong leadership to ensure successful cooperation in the field.

Even though the need for this type of leadership in joint programme coordination was reiterated in several protocols, the Network was unable to provide this type of leadership or coordination.<sup>32</sup>

## OTHER KEY WEAKNESSES: COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

The demand for one or more common advocacy campaigns per year has been practically unanimous. Small chapters have expressed a desire to be involved from the beginning in any strategy discussions that take place regarding the advocacy project.

Currently, some delegations want to participate more and to draw upon the experience they have gained in certain specific domains<sup>33</sup>:

The final key weakness is the area of communication.

Many interviewees were of the opinion that communication is something that is carried out based on topics and subject matter that should have been discussed and agreed on a common basis long before, but were in fact not.

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<sup>30</sup> Amendment to internal regulations of the MDM International Network 2004 May of 15

<sup>31</sup> Iraq coordination response in 2003, Zimbabwe AIDS programme coordination, Palestine coordination response in 2006, and the collaboration on emergency protocol in 2012.

<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that the leadership was questioned:

“Is it well accepted?”

–What is expected from this leadership in terms of:

- The Network
- Programmes”

<sup>33</sup> What does “Global Voice” mean? – “Spanish could use the Dutch voice in abortion!!” – a quote from interviewees.



# Some thoughts and feelings provoked by this study

This consultant's impression is that, from the beginning, the MdM Network has conducted its debates and affairs with a certain kind of "againstness".

What this means is that: "If the facts are against you, argue the law"<sup>34</sup>, and that the discussions and exchanges are often just as important as written rules.

After reading all of these documents and after contemplating all the interviews, the other overriding impression is that MdM's modus vivendi could be encapsulated in the following quote:

"It is easier to do (or redo) than to search old rules".

If we summarise all these lines of thought, at the heart of the matter is the sharing of power.

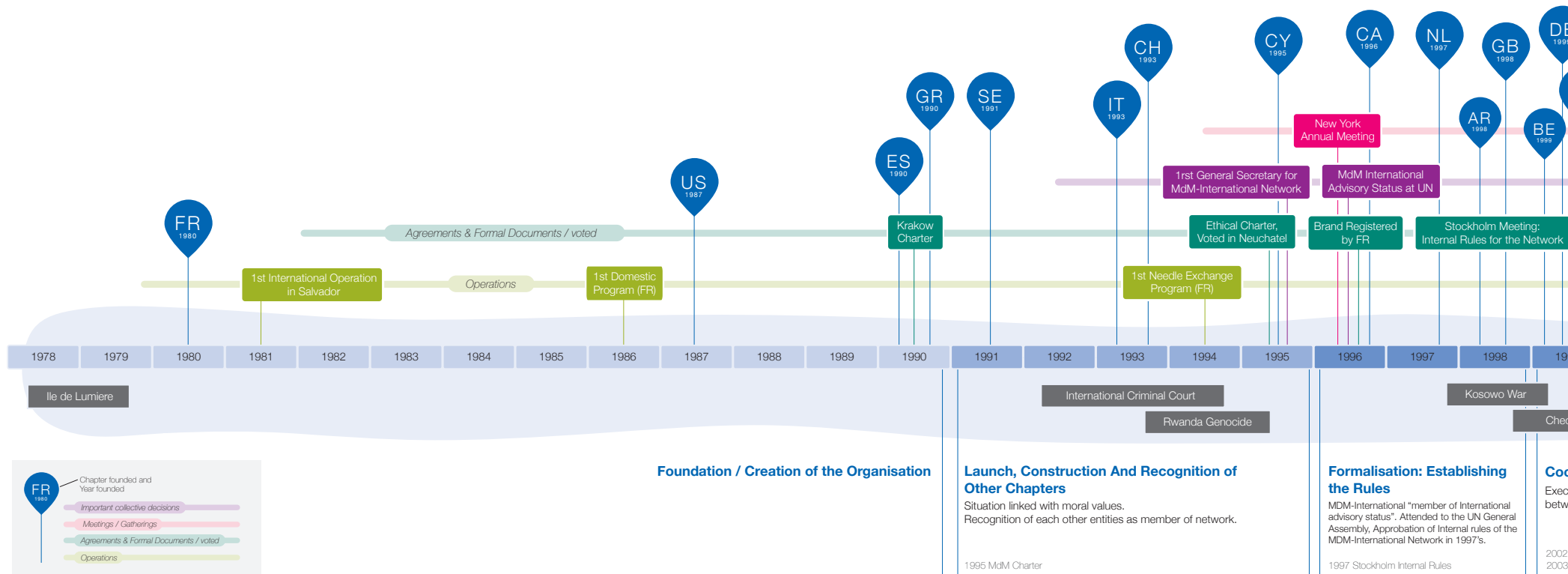
Interviewees generally agreed that the creation of this structure would necessarily have to be a community process, and that it could function well for the MdM style of governance.

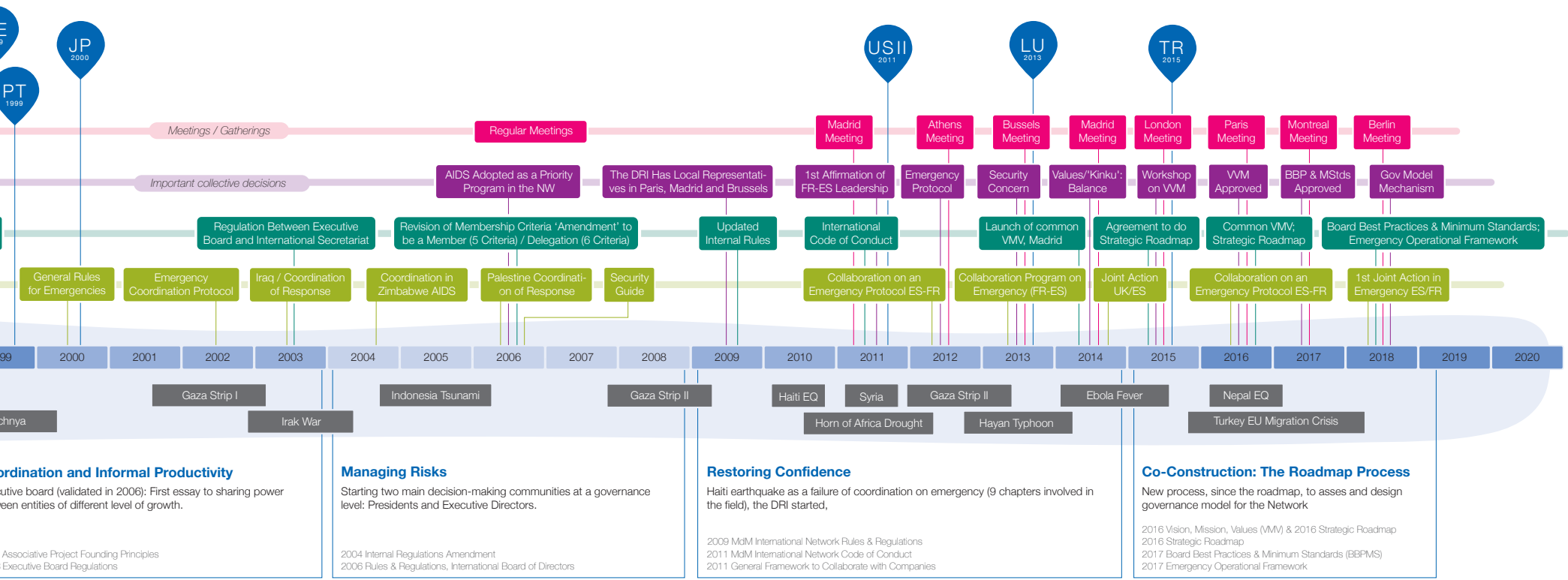
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<sup>34</sup> "If the facts are against you, argue the law. If the law is against you, argue the facts. If the law and the facts are against you, pound the table and yell like hell". Carl Sandburg.



# Chronology of the Network and major events







Argentina



Belgium



Canada



France



Germany



Greece



Japan



Luxembourg



Netherlands



Portugal



Spain



Sweden



Switzerland



Turkey



United Kingdom



United States

Médicos del Mundo Argentina  
[www.mdm.org.ar](http://www.mdm.org.ar)

Médecins du Monde Belgium  
[www.medecinsdumonde.be](http://www.medecinsdumonde.be)

Médecins du Monde Canada  
[www.medecinsdumonde.ca/fr/](http://www.medecinsdumonde.ca/fr/)

Médecins du Monde France  
[www.medecinsdumonde.org](http://www.medecinsdumonde.org)

Ärzte der Welt Germany  
[www.aerztederwelt.org](http://www.aerztederwelt.org)

Γιατροί του Κόσμου Greece  
[www.mdmgreece.gr](http://www.mdmgreece.gr)

世界の医療団 Japan  
[www.mdm.or.jp](http://www.mdm.or.jp)

Médecins du Monde Luxembourg  
[www.medecinsdumonde.lu/](http://www.medecinsdumonde.lu/)

Dokters van de Wereld Netherlands  
[www.doktersvandewereld.org](http://www.doktersvandewereld.org)

Médicos do Mundo Portugal  
[www.medicosdomundo.pt](http://www.medicosdomundo.pt)

Médicos del Mundo Spain  
[www.medicosdelmundo.org](http://www.medicosdelmundo.org)

Läkare i världen Sweden  
[www.lakareivarlden.se/](http://www.lakareivarlden.se/)

Médecins du Monde Switzerland  
[www.medecinsdumonde.ch](http://www.medecinsdumonde.ch)

Dünya Doktorlari Turkey  
[www.dunyadoktorlari.org.tr](http://www.dunyadoktorlari.org.tr)

Doctors of the World United Kingdom  
[www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk](http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk)

Doctors of the World United States  
[www.doctorsoftheworld.org](http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org)