



International Secretary General
February 2025



Call for Candidates: International Secretary General

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is launching the search for our next International Secretary General, a key leadership role that will shape the future of our Movement. As our current Secretary General's term concludes in September 2025, we are seeking an inspiring, strategic, and dedicated leader to uphold MSF's core principles and drive our humanitarian mission forward in an increasingly complex world.

This is a rare and exceptional opportunity to lead one of the world's most impactful medical humanitarian organizations. The ideal candidate will bring visionary leadership, a deep understanding of humanitarian operations and governance, and the ability to navigate global challenges—all while championing MSF's values of independence, impartiality, neutrality, and medical ethics.

We encourage passionate, dynamic and experienced leaders to apply for this critical role. Full Terms of Reference and application details are included in this document.

Warm regards,

On behalf of the International Board,



Dr. Christos Christou
International President
Médecins Sans Frontières



About MSF International

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is a global, independent, medical humanitarian organisation that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflicts, epidemics, healthcare exclusion and natural disasters. MSF offers assistance to people based only on need and irrespective of race, religion, gender or political affiliation.

MSF International is the legal entity that binds MSF's associations and other offices together. MSF International is the executive arm of the International Board (IB), and thus indirectly of the International General Assembly (IGA). Based in Geneva, MSF International provides political oversight, coordination, information, and support to the MSF Movement, implements international projects, and follows up on International Associative resolutions.

The Role

Role: Secretary General

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Salary: In line with MSF remuneration policy





Background

The Secretary General (SG) is appointed by and is accountable to the IB. The SG directly reports to the International President (IP).

The SG position was created along with MSF International in 1991 to assist Institutional Members (IMs) of MSF in fulfilling MSF's social mission as defined in the MSF Charter.

The SG works in tandem with the IP and in close collaboration with other members of the IB. The Deputy SG provides support to the SG.

The SG is the Chair of the MSF Executive Committee (ExCom) composed primarily of the General Directors of MSF Sections and Operational Directorates (ODs).

The International Office (IO) is the secretariat of the IB, and acts as intersectional coordinator, project manager, and service provider for the Movement. The IO is under the direct management of the SG. The IO is comprised of roughly 230 people hosted in MSF offices across multiple countries. This dynamic team, with its international scope and responsibility, carries out work delegated by the highest governance and management bodies of MSF to contribute to the broader orientations of the Movement.

Key Objectives of the Position

The SG plays a key role in defining, with the ExCom and under the direction of the IB, the Movement's ambitions and priorities, following and ensuring their effective implementation.

The SG is responsible for facilitating or implementing activities as directed by the IB as it pertains to monitoring, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the operations.

Main Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership:

The SG chairs the ExCom and acts as a conduit between the IB and the ExCom to ensure coherence between the associative and the operational priorities and expectations, as well as in actions undertaken within the web of ODs and Sections.

As MSF enters a new cycle, of particular importance is seeing through the successful implementation of a number of key strategic dossiers expected to impact the future of the Movement and its functioning.

Always front and center to MSF activities is the issue of risk management, which falls under the responsibilities of the SG.

Management of MSF International:

The SG oversees the IO. Key priority areas currently include:

- **Strategic Planning:** Leading the multi-year strategic planning exercise that defines the IO's long-term priorities and commitments, including its roles as secretariat, intersectional coordinator, and service provider.
- **Budget Oversight:** Supervising the annual budget with the IO Management Team (MT), ensuring that the preparation, approval, and deployment align with MSF's strategic goals.
- **International Office Oversight:** Managing the personnel, promoting diversity and MSF values, and fostering a cohesive team dynamic.
- **IO's Positioning and Roles:** Guiding the IO through changes necessary to adapt to the evolving needs of the Movement, a responsibility particularly relevant considering the work currently taking place on the Movement-wide strategic plan.
- **Platform Coordination:** Coordinating the activities of Movement-recognized platforms residing under the IO umbrella.
- **Accountability Initiatives:** Driving transparency and learning through regular reviews, reporting, and international agreements.
- **Intersectional Legal Department (ILD):** Supporting the ILD mandates and ensuring linkage with the ExCom.

- **International Contracting Office (ICO):** Overseeing the ICO, which handles contracts for over 10% of MSF's staff globally, ensuring compliant and consistent services.

Oversight of Access to Products of Healthcare (APH, formally Access Campaign):

- MSF's commitment to supporting the improvement of access to medicines and other products of healthcare remains a key priority for the Movement. The SG, on behalf of the ExCom, maintains a close relationship with the APH leadership, and oversees the management of the program, including structural changes.

Governance:

- The SG is responsible for the provision of timely and actionable information to the IB to facilitate effective decision-making and prioritisation.
- In collaboration with the IP, the SG focuses on strengthening executive-associative coordination by ensuring smooth information flow and promoting effective interactions and debates between MSF entities and platforms, referring to the ExCom or IB for arbitration if required.
- The SG looks for and promotes synergy, diversity, and expertise-sharing across the Movement, and champions associative principles of co-ownership, interdependence and inter-connectivity.
- The SG is expected to oversee the implementation of transformative decisions, decisions that will be critical to MSF in the achievement of its mission in the coming years.

Representation:

- Upon delegation by the IP, the SG represents the organisation and defends the principles, image, and interests of MSF vis-à-vis all international institutions and the broader public.
- The SG has a leading role in facilitating and promoting coherent public positioning and / or advocacy at the global level in consultation with the IB, ExCom and RIOD (Operation Directors platform) as necessary.
- Internally, the SG represents the international executive bodies vis-à-vis the IB and IGA.





Candidate Profile

Showcasing strong leadership capabilities, political savviness, ability to partner and collaborate effectively at the appropriate level, and being practical and transparent while navigating complexity is crucial in being able to quickly understand the nuances of all challenges, and identify opportunities for resolution.

Professional Experience:

- Significant (typically more than 5 years) senior management / leadership experience within MSF, and understanding of the functioning of the Operational Directorates
- Material and relevant field experience
- Corresponding experience with other humanitarian organisations, as an additional asset
- Experience of creating and leading strategic relations
- Experience in negotiation, conflict management and resolution
- Experience in governance roles, and demonstrated ability to convene and coordinate complex networks
- Change management expertise

Education:

- Relevant academic degree, with broad application at the global level, examples being (not an exhaustive list) International Relations, Business Management, Global Health, International Law

Skills/Qualifications:

- Strategic leadership and system-thinking ability
- Strong diplomatic and political influencing skills
- Demonstrated organisational management and process-leadership skills
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Understanding of risk management concepts and applications
- Ability to develop and lead multicultural, high-performance teams
- In-depth understanding of global humanitarian issues and international politics
- Exceptional communication and public relations skills
- Fluent in English; proficiency in French or other languages is an asset

Personal Attributes:

- Strong interpersonal and emotional intelligence skills, including strong listening, humility, as well as trust, and consensus-building, skills
- Inspiring, collaborative, and decisive
- Results-oriented with a “can-do” attitude
- Demonstrated commitment to MSF Charter and strong believer in the associative dimension of MSF
- Resilience under stress and ability to handle crises effectively
- Willingness and flexibility to travel extensively

How to Apply

All correspondence, at this stage, should be via Oxford HR. To apply for this post, click on the “Apply” button on the job advert page, complete our online application form, and submit your CV and cover letter as two different documents, which should be prepared before applying as they will be considered in the application process.

The cover letter should be no more than two pages long and explain why you are interested in this post and how your skills and experience make you a good fit.

The document should be saved in PDF in the following format: Your First Name-Your Last Name-Documents Name-Date (mmyy)-Organisation e.g., Sarah-James-CV-0225-MSF or Sarah-James-CoverLetter-0225-MSF.

Timeline

Closing Date:	21st March 2025
First Stage Interviews:	20th April – 6th May 2025
Final Interviews:	TBC

Selection Process

All candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the role email to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.

Equality Statement

MSF believes that achieving workforce diversity will better serve the social mission and is therefore committed to diversity in terms of gender, nationality, culture, and people living with disabilities. Everyone is equally encouraged to apply.

Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion, please email at mbillanou@oxfordhr.com in the first instance.





About Oxford HR

Oxford HR is a B Corp certified leadership consultancy. Having worked within a diverse range of institutions, from not-for-profits and charities to governments and corporate environments, we've seen the powerful impact that the perfect team can have.

Finding innovative leaders can be a challenge; and yet their transition into leadership is vital to an organisation's mission and success. We work across the globe to search for and support remarkable leaders and teams, improve their board effectiveness and support on a range of leadership functions.

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