



# Governance in MSF

International structure, entities and platforms (2021)



# Operational Centres (OC)

MSF has five **Operational Centres (OC)**. An Operational Centre is a group of entities that provides guidance and support to the operations in the field. These OCs have their headquarters in Amsterdam (OCA), Barcelona-Athens (OCBA), Brussels (OCB), Geneva (OCG) and Paris (OCP). There is also an **International Office (IO)** in charge of international coordination and institutional representation, which is headquartered in Geneva.

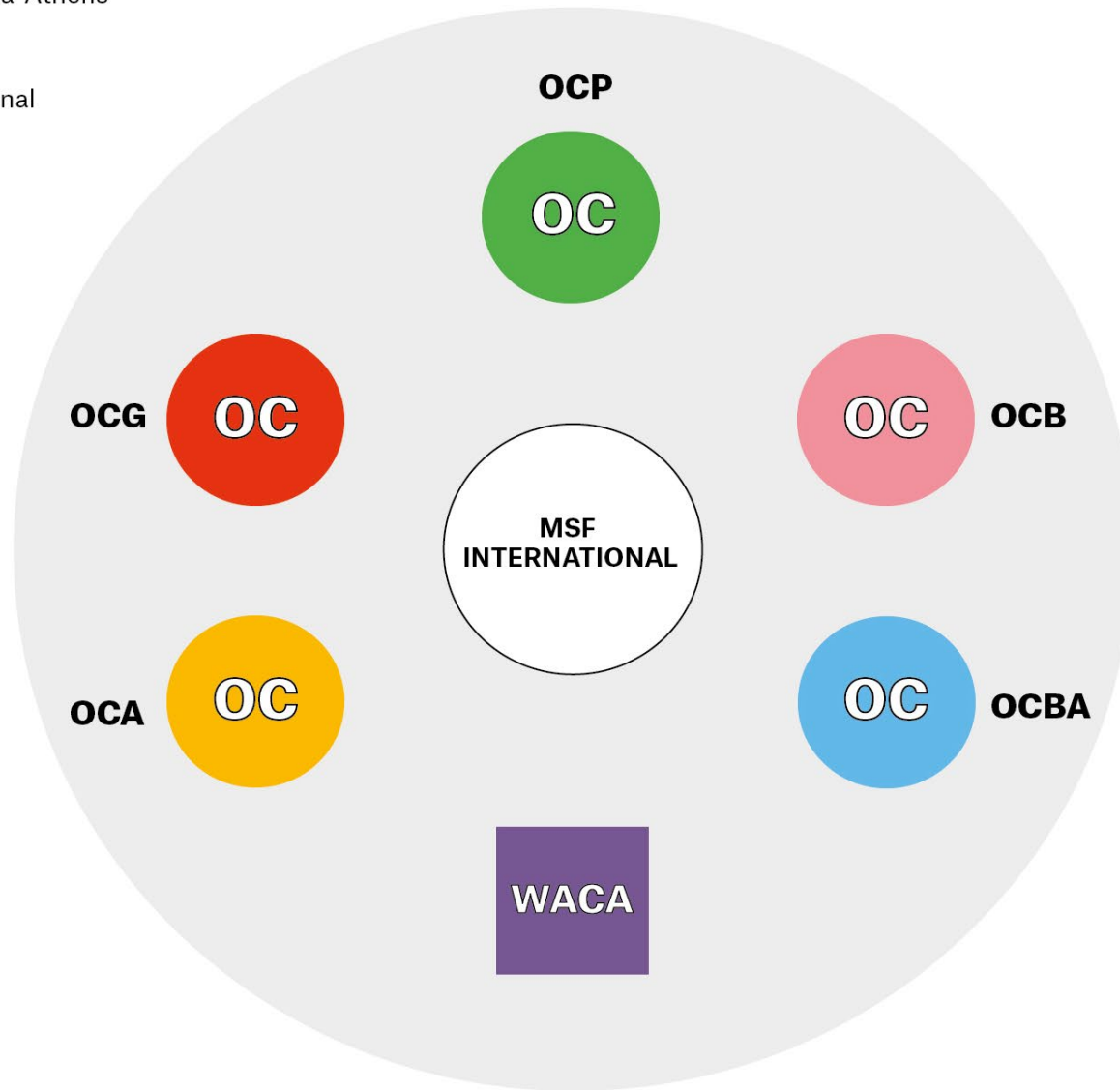
Each OC works in an independent but coordinated way. All the OCs have a very similar structure:

**Operational Centre =  
Operational Section + Partner Sections + Branch Offices**

Each OC is governed by an association which has its own Board of Directors, formed by representatives of the different sections that work with that OC. The main task of this Board is to approve and monitor the Annual plan, budget and Strategic plan of the OC. So, following this same structure, we have the following Operational Directorates: **OCA Council, OCB Board, OCG Congress, OCBA Agora and OCP Group Committee.**

**Note:** In 2019 WaCA (West and Central Africa Regional Association) was approved as a new Institutional Member (i.e. MSF Association) “with the right to run operations” by the IGA, MSF’s highest governance body. This is the first association of the sort: right now, WaCA is not defined, in MSF executive governance, as a section, or operational center, etc. This is the reason why it is represented in this booklet in a specific manner. WaCA launched its first operations in early 2020. More information on page 10.

- **OC:** Operational Centre
- **OCA:** Operational Centre Amsterdam
- **OCB:** Operational Centre Brussels
- **OCBA:** Operational Centre Barcelona-Athens
- **OCG:** Operational Centre Geneva
- **OCP:** Operational Centre Paris
- **WACA:** West & Central Africa Regional Association (based in Ivory Coast)



*Agora is the OCBA Board.  
More information in the Annex (page 16).*

# Operational (OS) and Partner (PS) Sections

Both the **Operational Sections (OS)** and the **Partner Sections (PS)** contribute strategically to operations through human resources recruitment, fundraising, external communications, advocacy and civil society awareness, as well as through units that provide technical support to operations and/or decentralised operational cells. The only difference between them is that Operational Sections are where the headquarters of the Operational Centres are located.

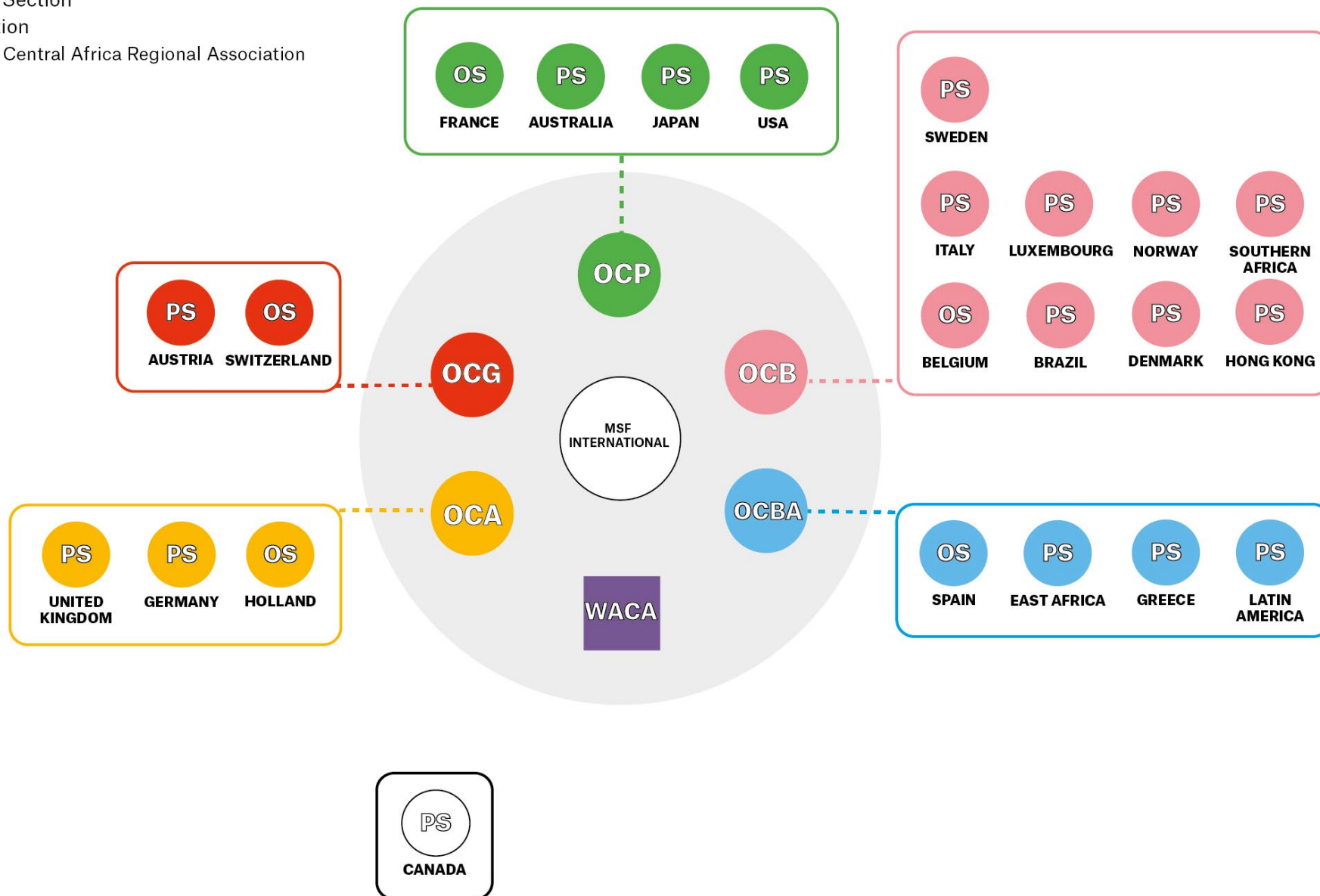
MSF Canada is a special case as it has established formal collaboration ties with several OCs, namely OCBA, OCG and OCA (see Annex).

All MSF sections are **Associations** that have their own executive team for everyday management of the organisation.

At the annual General Assembly, members of each Association vote to approve the financial accounts, the President's report, the Annual Plan, the budget for the coming year and the Strategic Plan for their section (if applicable). Members also vote on motions and elect new members to the Board of Directors. The Board safeguards MSF's identity and MSF principles, appoints the General Director and supports the executive team.

Note: This is not a closed model; relations between sections are flexible and dynamic.

- **OCA:** Operational Centre Amsterdam
- **OCB:** Operational Centre Brussels
- **OCBA:** Operational Centre Barcelona-Athens
- **OCG:** Operational Centre Geneva
- **OCP:** Operational Centre Paris
- **OS:** Operational Section
- **PS:** Partner Section
- **WACA:** West and Central Africa Regional Association



# Branch Offices (BO)

**Branch Offices (BO)** are another type of MSF entity. They are not separate associations and so it is the section they are attached to that is responsible for establishing their annual plans and budgets and also for appointing their general managers (See Annex, page 23).

These offices not only help to guarantee an inflow of human resources and funds, but also do external communications and advocacy. In some cases, they can also support operations and/or host an operational cell.

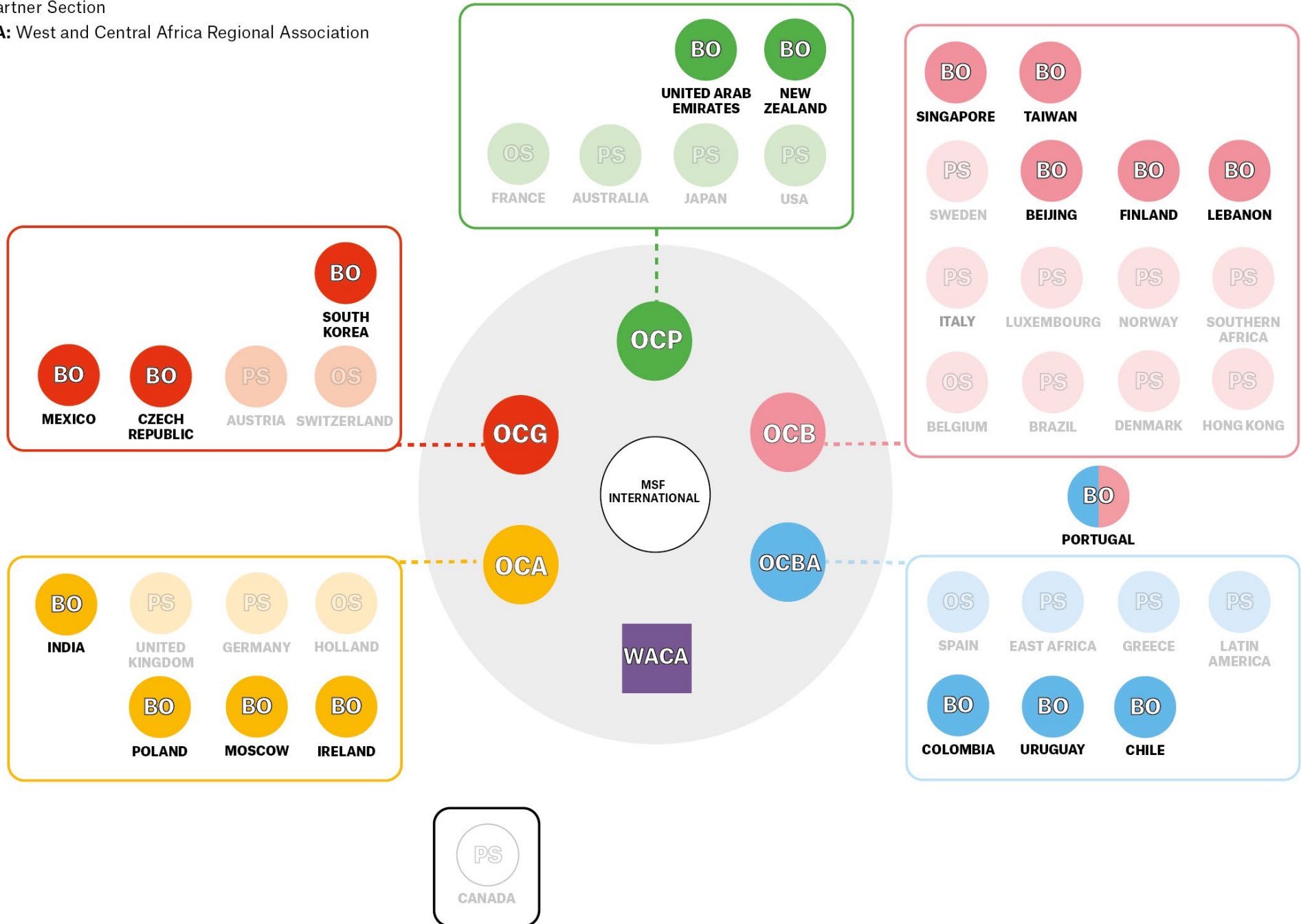
Some Branch Offices are only dedicated to fundraising, such as Uruguay. Others are mainly dedicated to managing institutional relations, such as Moscow.

The latest Branch Offices approved by the International General Assembly are:

- Moscow, Beijing and Nairobi in 2017 (respectively under MSF Germany, MSF Hong Kong, MSF Spain).
- Lebanon in 2018 under MSF Belgium.
- Colombia in 2019 under MSF LAT.
- Poland and Portugal in 2020 (respectively under MSF Germany and MSF Spain together with MSF Brazil).
- Chile in 2021 under MSF LAT.

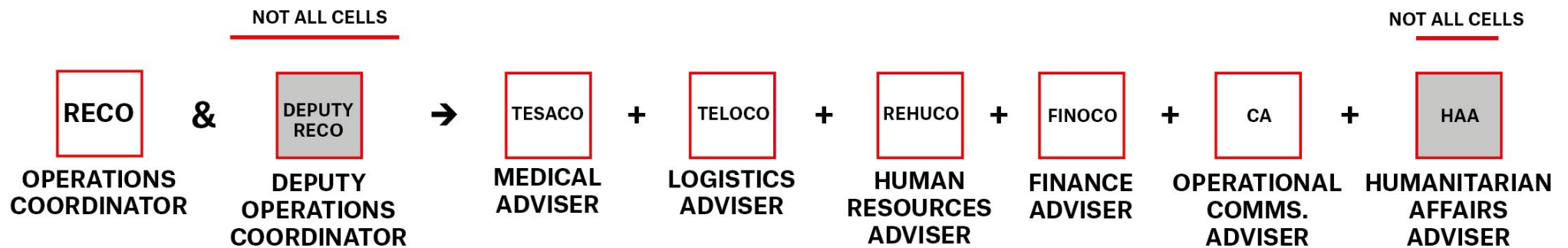
Note: MSF entities relations are detailed in the graphic in Annex, page 23.

- **BO:** Branch Office
- **OS:** Operational Section
- **PS:** Partner Section
- **WACA:** West and Central Africa Regional Association



# Units & Decentralised Operational Cells

All Operational Sections (OS) manage their operations through **operational cells**, which are responsible for managing a certain number of missions. The cells and each OS's Emergency Unit are generally made up of:



*Exceptionally REHUCO, TELOCO and FINOCO positions are merged in one single position called "Resource Manager"*

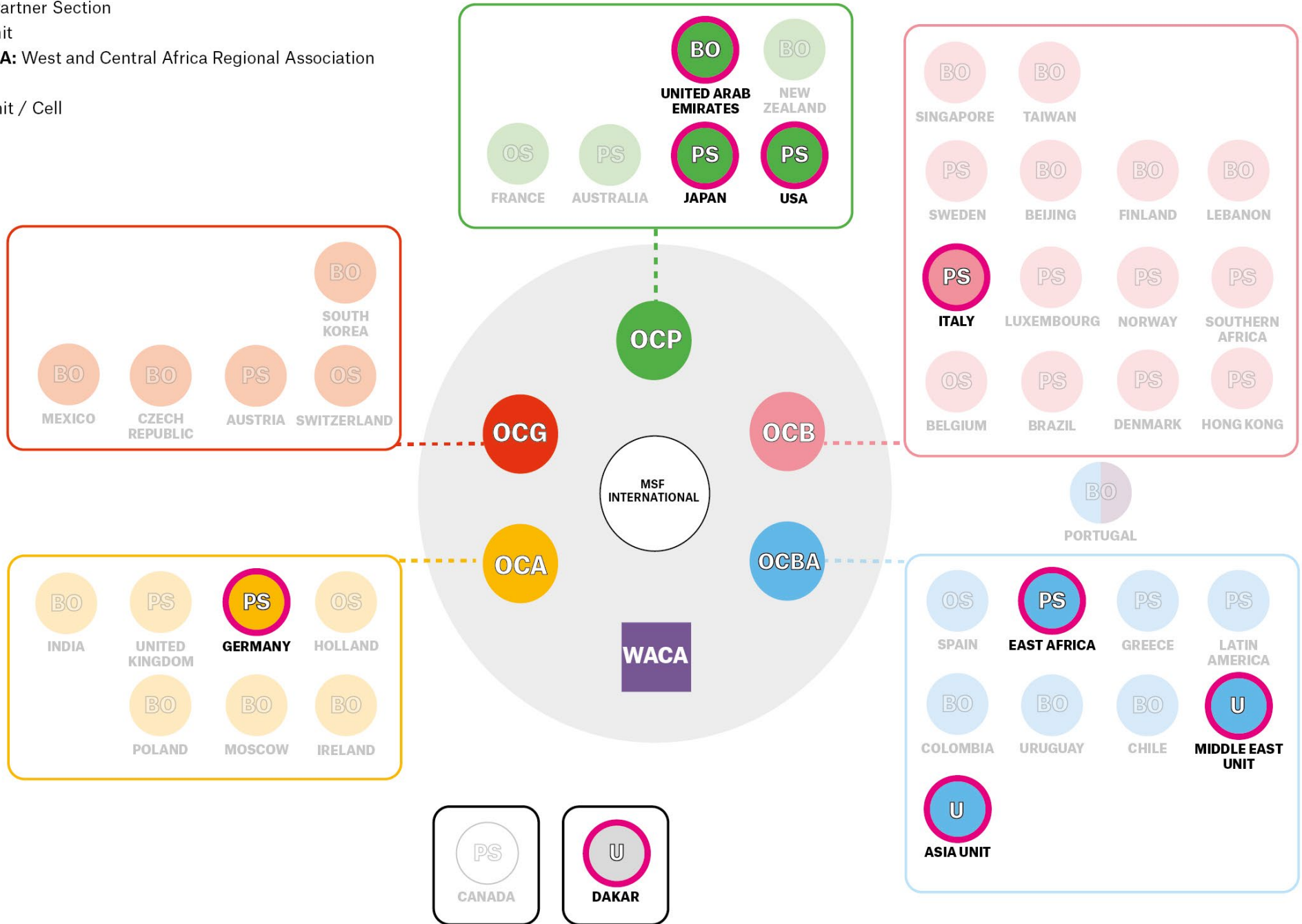
In order to share operationality, some cells were decentralised to Partner Sections, like for instance USA and Japan (OCP), Germany (OCA) and Italy (OCB). Some cells have also been moved to BOs like the UAE Branch Office (OCP). Also there are some units and other offices that give operational support like Dakar and the Middle East Unit, Amman.

**OCBA has placed operational cells in regional hubs to increase proximity to our operations and to improve their support to the field:** Cell 5 was moved to the Nairobi (Kenya) in 2012, Cell 1 was moved to Amman (Jordan) at the end of 2016 and Cell 2 was moved to Dakar (Senegal) in September 2020. At the same time, OCBA operations in South & South east Asia are managed by the Asia Unit, whose members are based in Asia.



- **BO:** Branch Office
- **OS:** Operational Section
- **PS:** Partner Section
- **U:** Unit
- **WACA:** West and Central Africa Regional Association

○ Unit / Cell



# 25 MSF associations

Since it was first created, MSF has been an **association** with an international vocation. Its members subscribe to the principles and values established in the MSF Charter. The commitment of each of its members to the MSF movement is not just limited to complying with their individual role in a mission or office, but also implies their active participation in the associative life of the organisation.

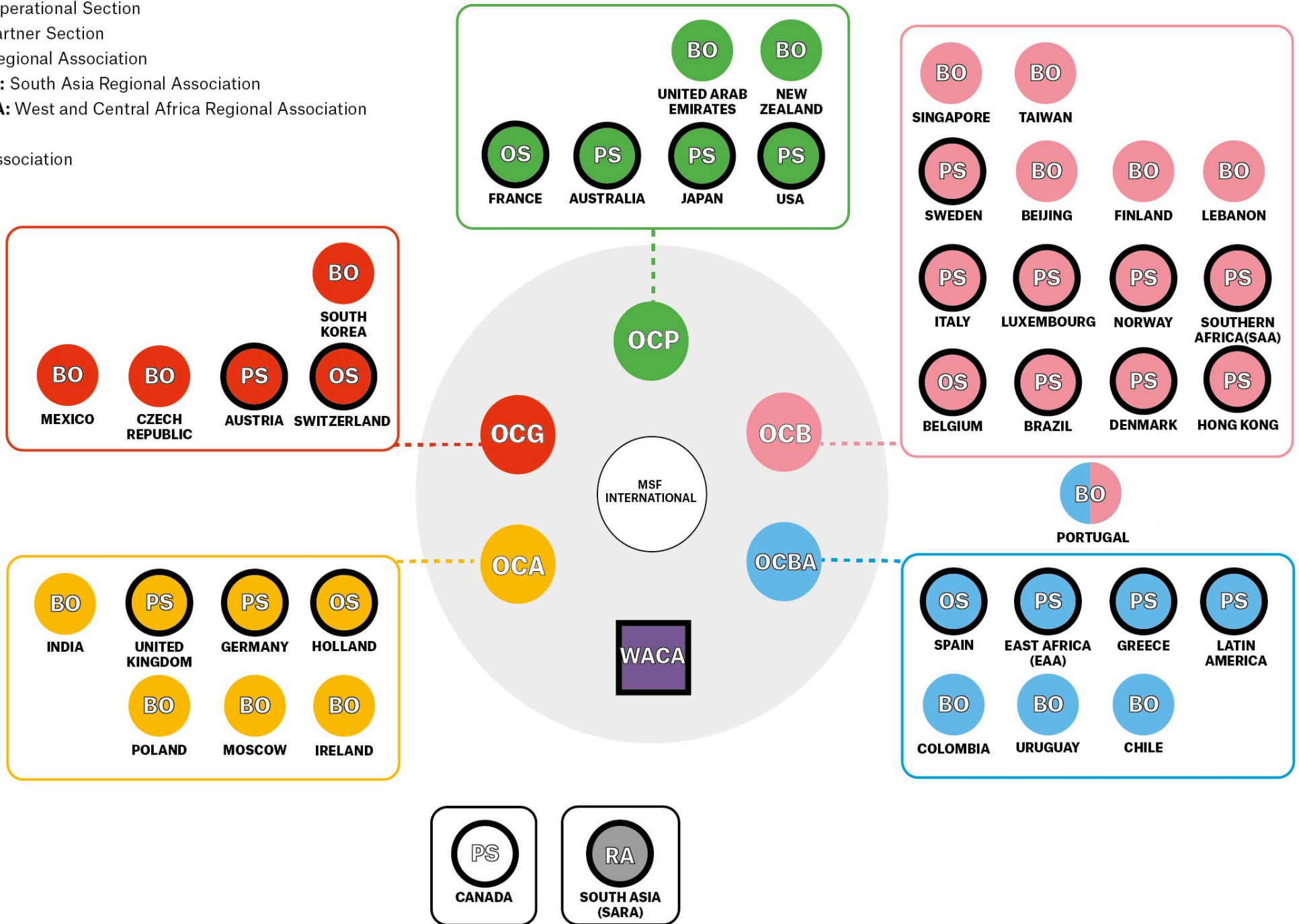
Following the La Mancha process of reflection, MSF decided to open itself up to the voices of colleagues that were not represented in the original associations. As a result, in 2011 the association of Brazil was approved and more **regional associations** were created: Latin America (MSF LAT), East Africa (EAA) and Southern Africa (SAA). In 2014 South Asia Regional Association (SARA) was created and in 2019 the regional association of West and Central Africa (WaCA) was born, with the right to run operations from 2020.

The area covered by a regional association is not limited to a country, but includes a whole region. Hong Kong was the first one, born in 1994.

The MSF Spain association was created in 1986 and now has more than 700 members.

- **BO:** Branch Office
- **EAA:** Eastern Africa Regional Association
- **OS:** Operational Section
- **PS:** Partner Section
- **RA:** Regional Association
- **SARA:** South Asia Regional Association
- **WACA:** West and Central Africa Regional Association

○ Association



# The International General Assembly (IGA)

At the international governance level, the OC logic disappears and all associations participate as individual **Institutional Members** of **MSF International**, the association that brings together all the MSF associations and that was created to coordinate the global activities of MSF. MSF International is composed of:

- The institutional members
- Individual members, who can directly join MSF International (known as the Movement-Wide Association – MWA)
- The International President

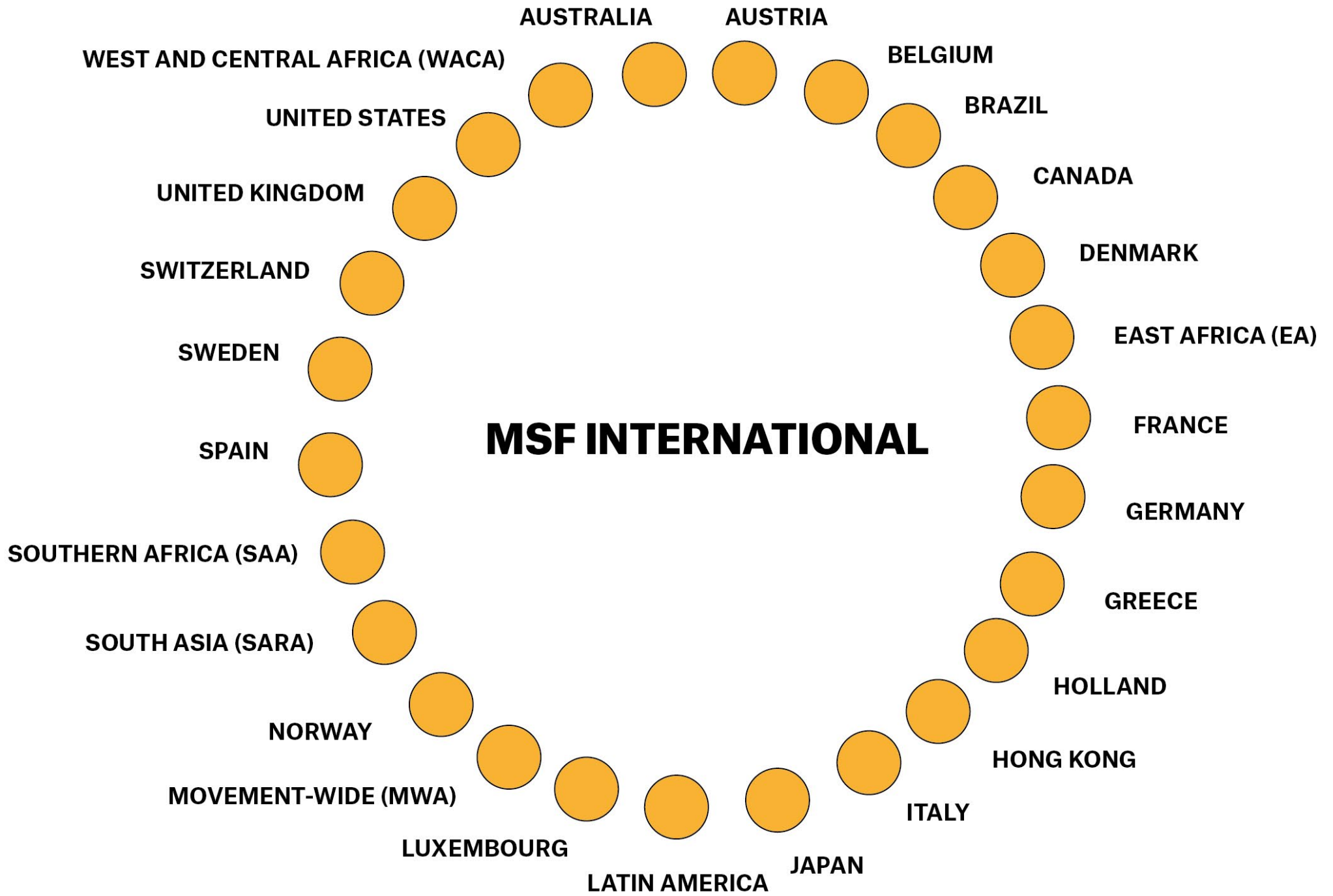
Once a year, all MSF associations gather at the **International General Assembly (IGA)**, the highest governance body of the MSF movement. Each association has two representatives at the IGA (at least one must have a medical background). Members of the Movement-Wide Association are also represented by two people.

The International General Assembly has the power to:

- Amend the Statutes and Internal Rules
- Admit or expel Institutional Members (MSF associations)
- Grant or withdraw the right to run operational projects
- Elect and remove members of the International Board, including the International President

The International President and six members of the International Board are elected by vote at the IGA.





# International Board of Directors (IB)

The **International Board of Directors** (IB) is the body designated by the IGA to oversee the activities of the MSF movement. A majority of its members must have a medical profile. Its composition is as follows:



*Note: In 2021, two members are coopted into the IB: the International Treasurer, and the President of WaCA. Coopted members do not have voting rights.*

The IB's mandate is to:

- Resolve issues or conflicts within the MSF movement
- Open and close executive entities
- Make specific recommendations to the IGA (e.g. whether to admit or expel Institutional members)
- Be accountable for implementing IGA decisions
- Supervise the executive team in the implementation of the MSF Vision

The IB oversees the **Executive Committee (ExCom)** and the International Office.

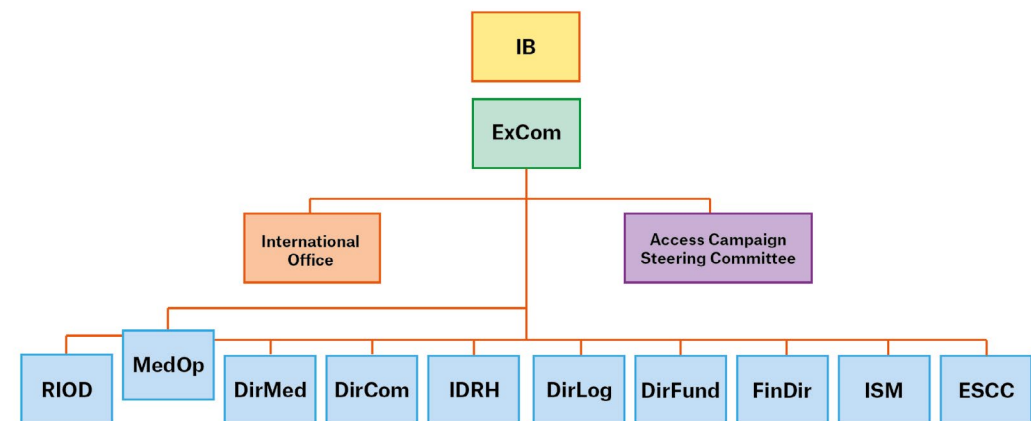
# Executive Committee (ExCom)

The **Executive Committee (ExCom)** is the highest executive body and the counterpart of the International Board. The objective of the ExCom platform is to provide international executive leadership of the MSF movement in accordance with the MSF vision and to coordinate the implementation of an international work plan, ensuring reactivity, efficiency, relevance and consistency in MSF's social mission and support activities. One body, multiple formations:

- **Core ExCom:** formed by the five OC general directors (GDs), the International Medical Secretary (IMS), the International Secretary General (SG) and two sections GDs selected for their particular experience and skills.
- **Full ExCom:** formed by all GDs of the movement, the IMS, the SG and other invited according to the circumstances.
- **Core + ExCom:** formed by the Core ExCom, selected GDs and the SG.

The **International Office (IO)** has its headquarters in Geneva, and the coordinators of the different executive platforms (RIOD, DirMed, DirCom, ESCC, MedOp, DirLog, DirFund, FinDir, IDHR and ISM). See glossary for more information) are based in several locations around the world.

The **Secretary General** is in charge of the IO and also represents the ExCom at the IB.



# Annex 1. OCBA Board of Directors: Agora

The **Agora** is the governance body of OCBA. It is responsible for establishing the strategic direction of our Operational Centre and for overseeing the fulfilment of the social mission. It also ensures adherence to the Charter and the principles and values of MSF.

The Agora is formed by the members of the Board of MSF Spain, one member from MSF Greece (designated by their own Board) and one member of each association OCBA collaborates with according to specific agreements. The Agora can also choose other members for their particular knowledge or skills. Its president is the president of MSF Spain.

The majority of the members of the Agora must have a medical profile.

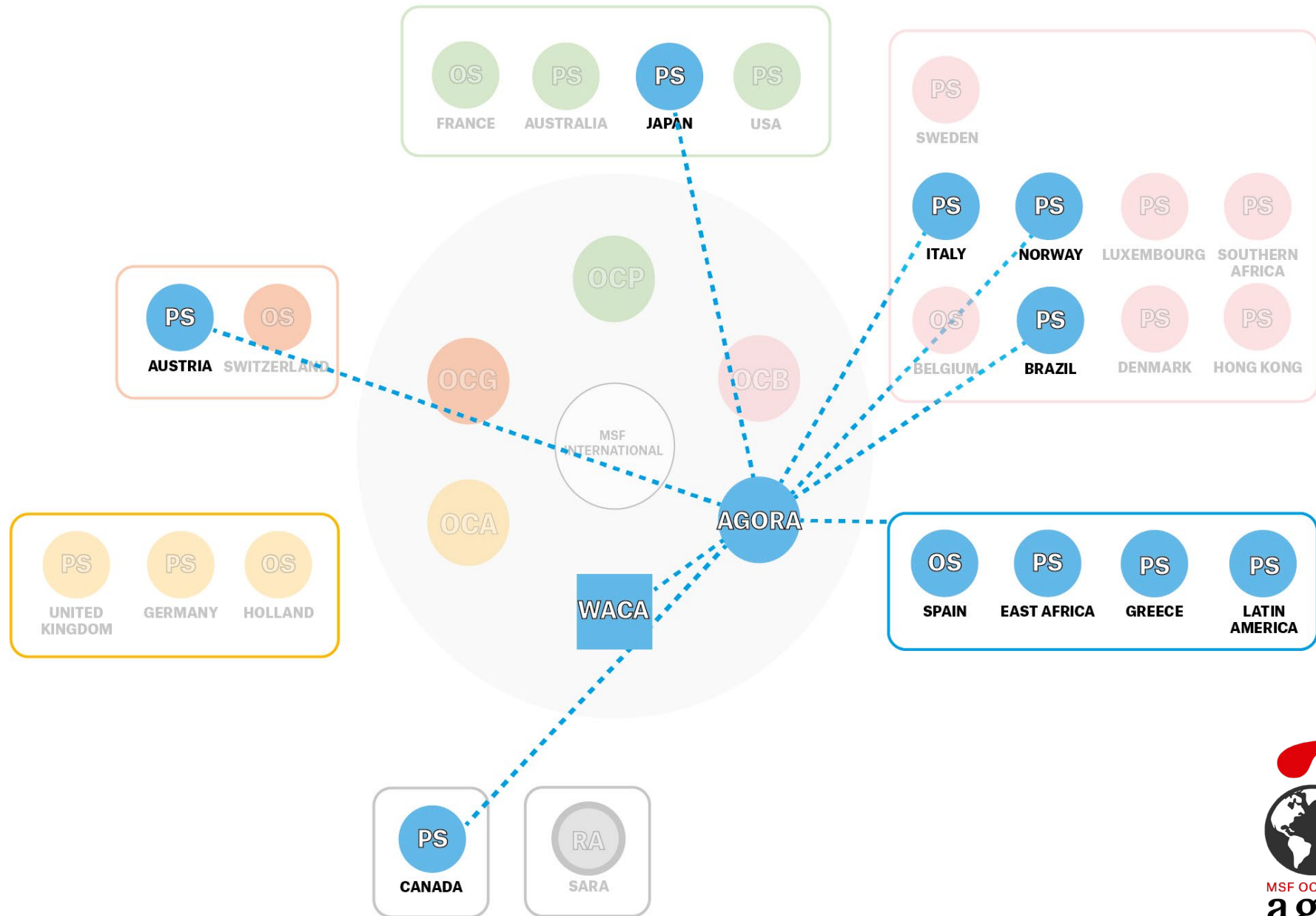
## Agora voting rights:

### INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS



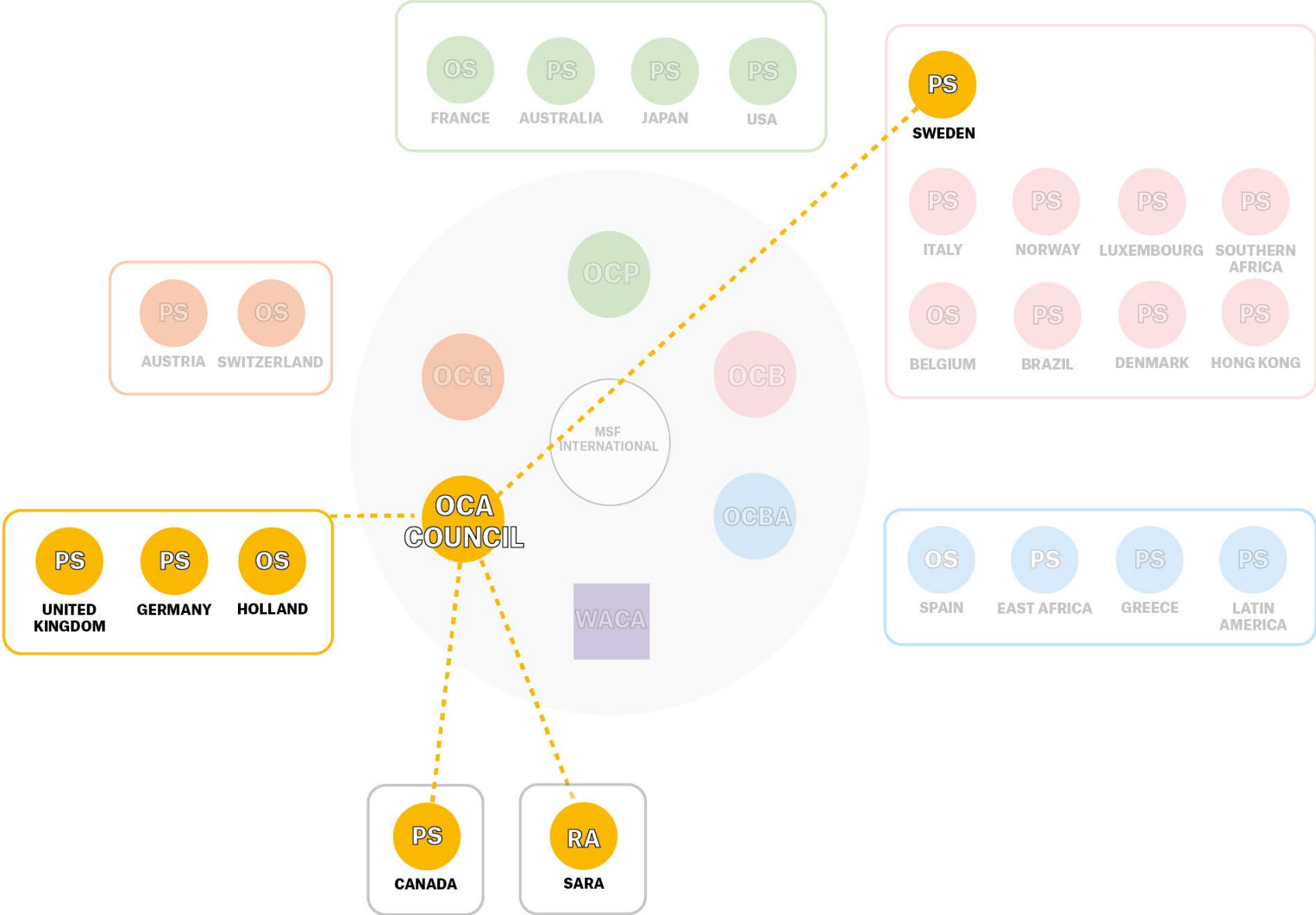


- **OS:** Operational Section
- **PS:** Partner Section
- **WACA:** West and Central Africa Regional Association



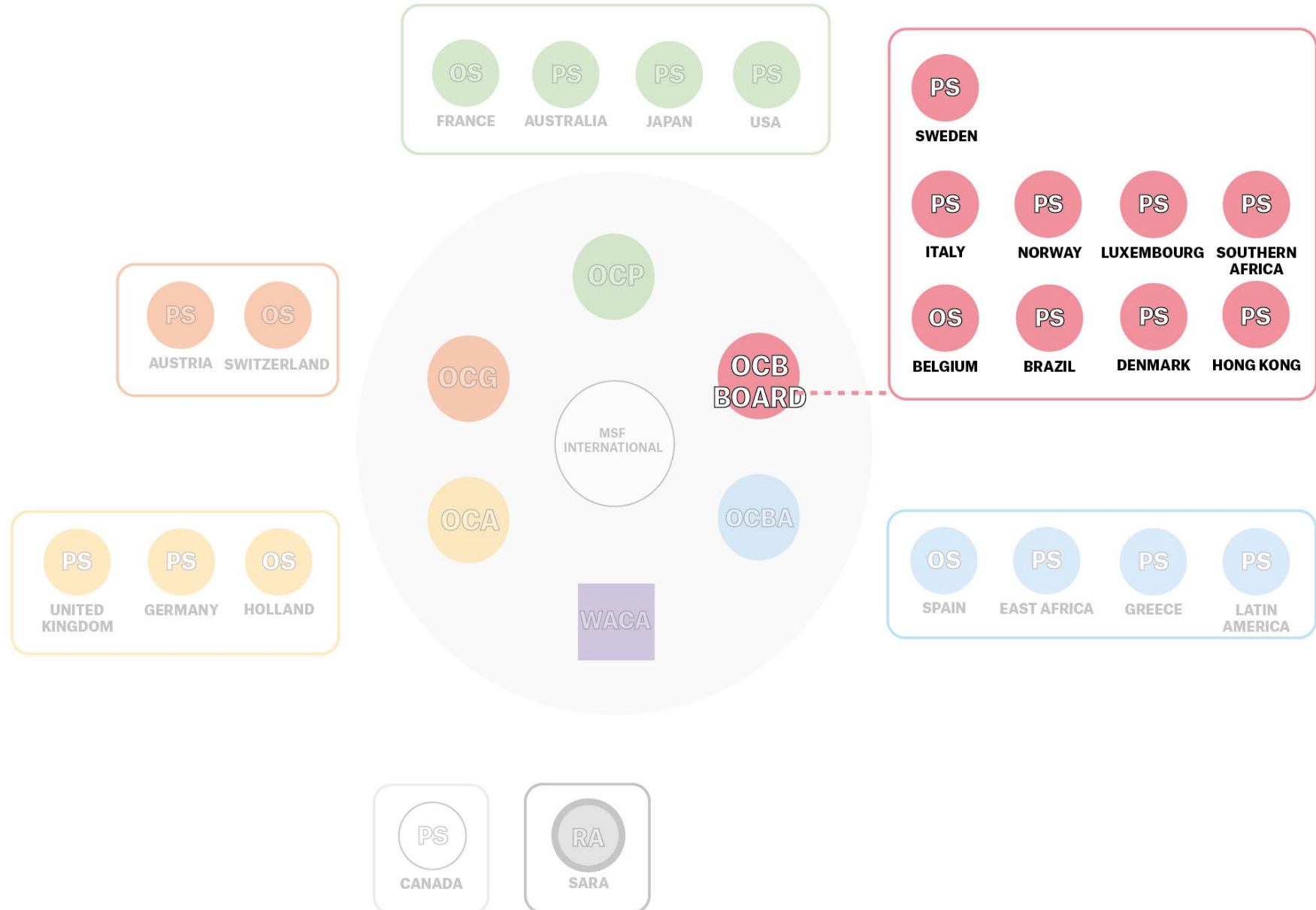
# Annex 2. OC Board of Directors: OCA Council

The OCA Council is accountable to the Boards of the OCA Partners. These Partner Boards are MSF Canada, MSF Germany, MSF Holland, MSF SARA, MSF Sweden, and MSF UK. The OCA Council is comprised of two representatives from each Partner Board; the exception is MSF Canada and MSF Sweden, that have one representative.



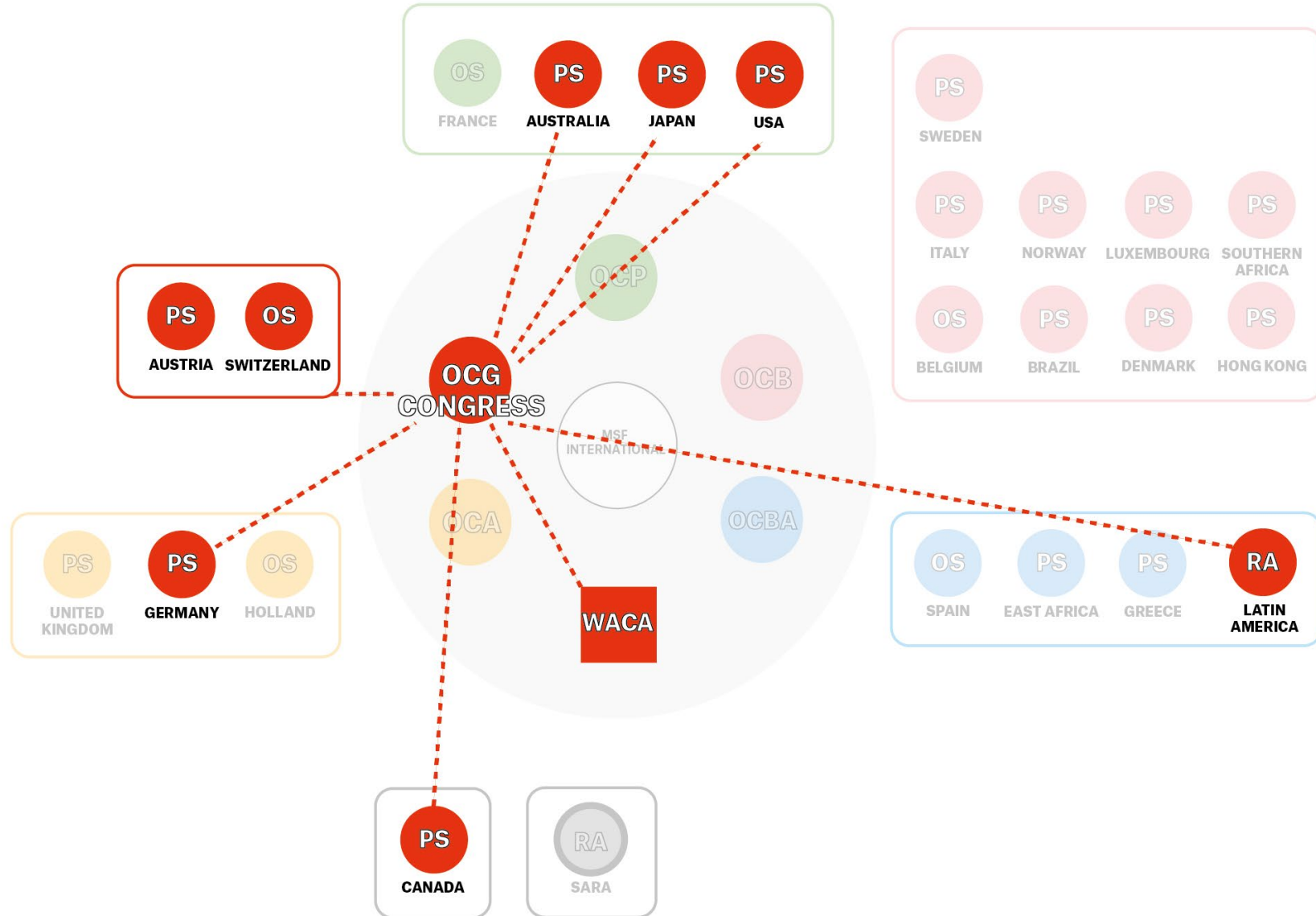
# Annex 3. OC Board of Directors: OCB Board

The OCB Board has 15 members: the representatives of the nine OCB associations and six persons directly elected by the MSF OCB members during the OCB Gathering (the General Assembly gathering all OCB members). Since 2019, one co-opted field representative without voting rights also sits on the board.



# Annex 4. OC Board of Directors: OCG Congress

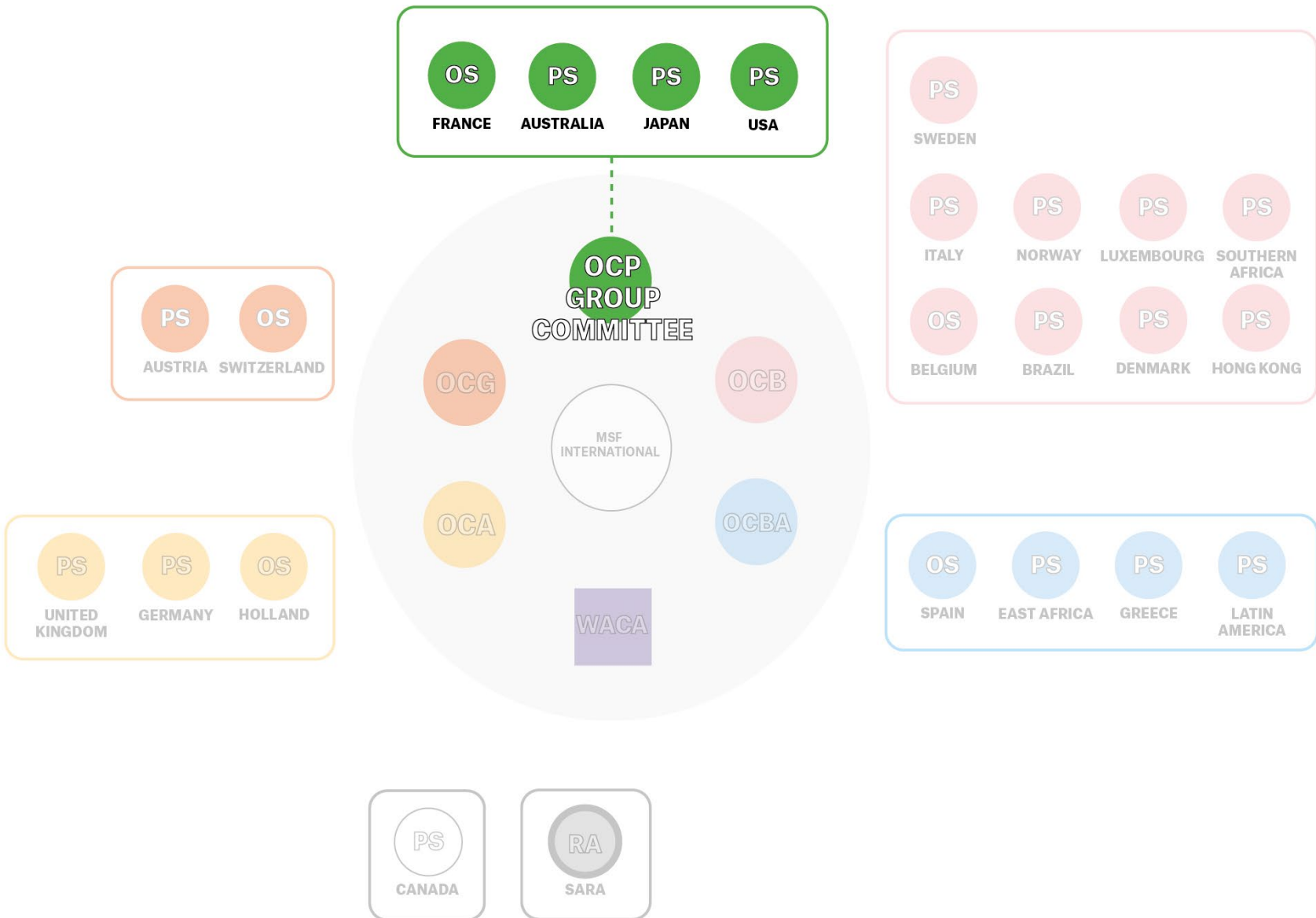
The OCG board is made up of representatives of the nine associations part of OCG and is called OCG Congress. The president of MSF Switzerland is the president of the OCG Congress. The role of the OCG Congress is three-fold: (1) to provide strategic guidance on the elaboration, follow up and implementation of OCG's social mission; (2) to oversee OCG's social mission; (3) to ensure ownership of OCG's social mission, as well as responsibility and accountability to associations and to the wider MSF Movement.





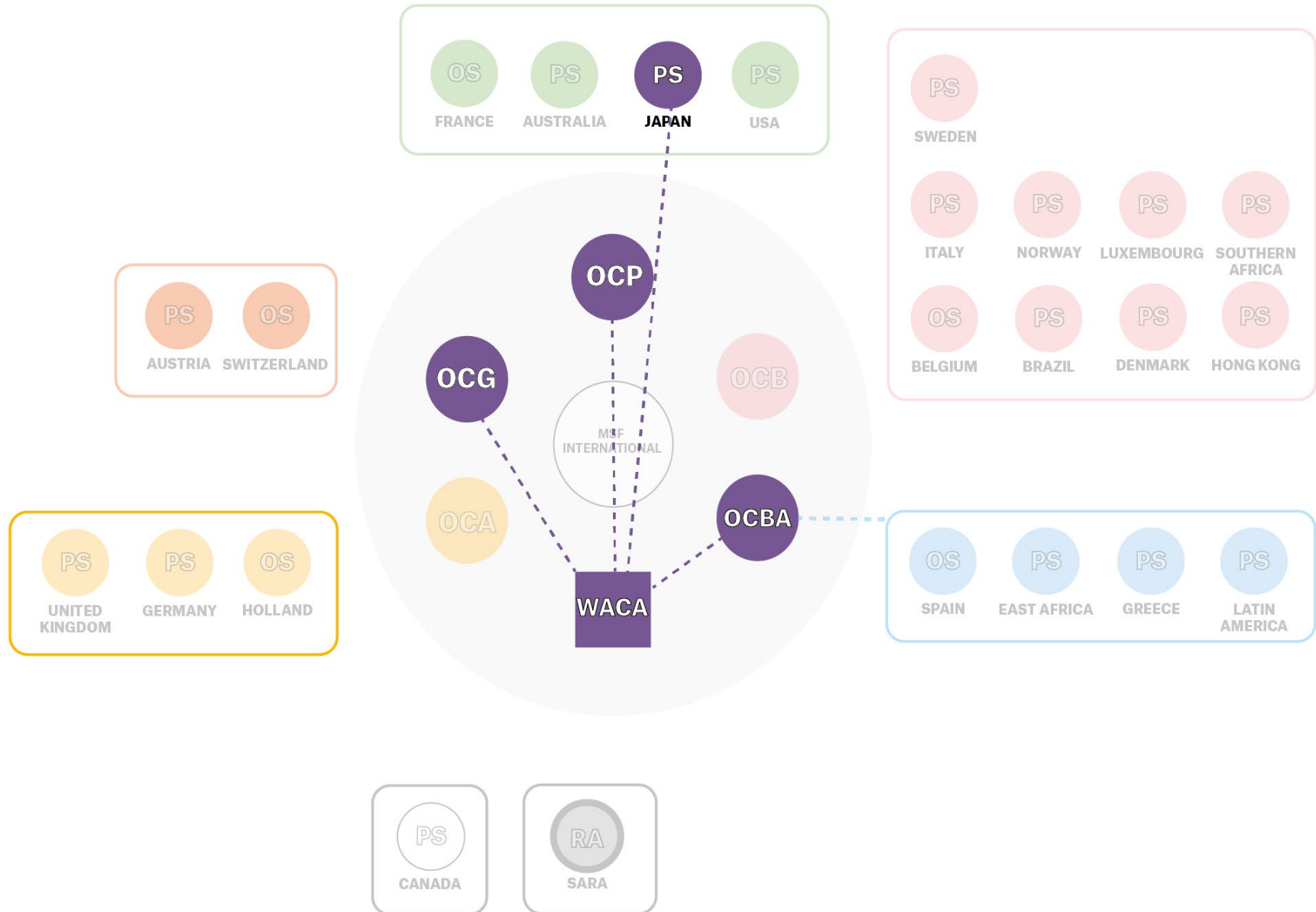
# Annex 5. OC Board of Directors: OCP Group Committee

OCP is formed by 4 associations: France as operational section and United States, Japan and Australia as partners. The associative body that oversees OCP operations is the OCP Group Committee where each association forming part of the OC is represented with 2 representatives (one being always the president and the other a board member). The President of the OCP Group is the President of MSF France.



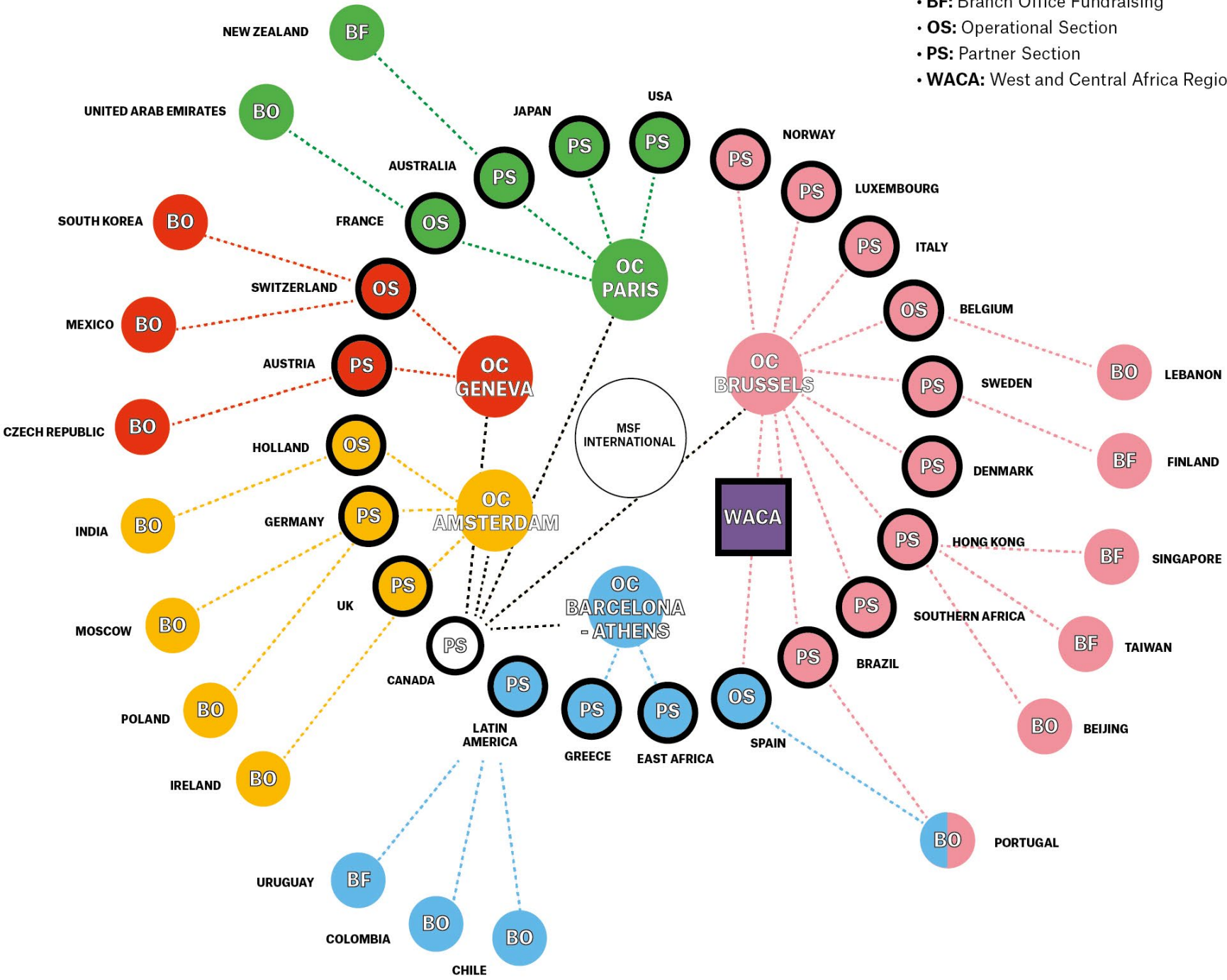
# Annex 6. WaCA Governance

The WaCA board composition is designed to ensure a rootedness in the WaCA association through a majority of elected members and to reflect the partnership that exists between WaCA and other OCs and sections. The board therefore comprises 6 members directly elected by the WaCA membership, as well as one coopted representative from: OCG; OCP; OCBA; MSF Japan.



# Annex 7. Entities relations

- **BO:** Branch Office
- **BF:** Branch Office Fundraising
- **OS:** Operational Section
- **PS:** Partner Section
- **WACA:** West and Central Africa Regional Association



# Glossary

**Agora:** OCBA governance body. Responsible for setting the strategic direction of our Operational Centre and for supervising the fulfilment of the social mission. The Agora also ensures adherence to the Charter and to MSF principles and values.

**Association:** MSF was founded by a group of individuals with common goals and ideas regarding how humanitarian action should be. Several decades later, this associative identity still continues. The association is responsible for defining the general direction of the movement. The members of the association represent the highest authority of MSF when they gather at the General Assembly.

**Board of Directors:** composed of members of the association elected at the General Assembly and accountable to it. The Board represents members and its task is to ensure that MSF respects the principles of the MSF Charter in its work and decision-making. It oversees the executive.

**Branch Office:** support office for fundraising or recruitment purposes. It also can do communications or provide operational support. It reports to a Section.

**Decentralised Cell, Med / Log Unit:** operational cell located away from its operational section. Can be located in a partner section or in a regional hub.

**Executive Committee:** highest executive body.

**Executive Team:** puts into practice in the field operations the ideals and guidelines expressed by the association members. It is made up of MSF workers and is structured in different departments.

**General Assembly:** highest governance body of an association. Each association approves at its General Assembly the previous year's accounts, the Annual Plan, and the next year's Budget and Strategic Plan (if applicable). The members of the association's Board of Directors and its President are also elected.

**International Board:** board of directors of MSF International.

**International General Assembly:** highest governance body of MSF International.

**International Office:** coordination and institutional representation office headquartered in Geneva.

**OCA Council:** MSF OCA governance body.

**OCB Board:** MSF OCB governance body.

**OCBA Agora:** see Agora.

**OCG Congress:** MSF OCG governance body.

**OCP Group Committee:** MSF OCP governance body.

**Operational Cell:** Team in charge of managing the missions in a certain group of countries.

**Operational Centre:** group of sections that guide and support operations in the field.

**Partner Section:** section attached to an MSF Operational Centre, which provides support in human resources, communications, fundraising and so on.

**Regional Association:** association whose field of action is not limited to a country but represents a whole region.



# Acronyms

**BO:** Branch Office

**DirCom:** executive platform formed by the directors of the Communications departments

**DirFund:** executive platform formed by the directors of the Fundraising departments

**DirLog:** executive platform formed by the directors of the Logistics departments

**DirMed:** executive platform formed by the directors of the Medical departments

**EAA:** East Africa Association

**ESCC:** Executive Supply Chain Committee

**ExCom:** Executive Committee

**FinDir:** executive platform formed by the directors of the Finance departments

**GA:** General Assembly

**GD:** General Director

**IB:** International Board

**IDHR:** executive platform formed by the directors of the HR departments

**IGA:** International General Assembly

**IMS:** International Medical Secretary

**IO:** International Office

**ISM:** executive platform formed by the directors of the Management Systems departments

**MedOp:** executive platform formed by the DirMed + RIOD. Chaired by the International Medical Secretary

**MWA:** Movement-Wide Association

**OC:** Operational Centre

**OCA:** Operational Centre Amsterdam

**OCB:** Operational Centre Brussels

**OCBA:** Operational Centre Barcelona-Athens

**OCG:** Operational Centre Geneva

**OCP:** Operational Centre Paris

**OS:** Operational Section

**PS:** Partner Section

**RA:** Regional Association

**RIOD:** executive platform formed by the directors of the Operations departments

**SAA:** Southern Africa Association

**SARA:** South Asia Regional Association

**SG:** International Secretary General

**WaCA:** West and Central Africa Regional Association

# MSF Spain / OCBA Association

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