

INSARAG

The Americas Regional Chairmanship Group

News Bulletin, 2016 / 02 (June)

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

ECUADOR'S EARTHQUAKE: A SCENARIO TO ASSESS THE STRENGTHS WE HAVE IN THE AMERICAS

By: Carlos Iván Márquez Pérez,
General Director,
National Unit for Disaster Risk Management

As Chair of the INSARAG Americas Regional Group, I can state that the experience of activating the response scheme of the United Nations through INSARAG following the earthquake in Ecuador of 16 April left us very important lessons.

1. The Region evidenced that the INSARAG methodology works as a system of urban search and rescue, in line with the protocols that have been operating, 2. The communication, coordination, and leadership shown by the Secretariat for the Americas was appreciated by the President of the Republic of Ecuador 3. The local staff mobilized, the UNDAC team and other members were available and worked in coordination with the regional system and Ecuador's Risk Management Secretariat. 4. It is worthwhile noting that some, but not all, teams responding to the emergency, applied the established protocols, registered in the Virtual OSOCC, and, as a fundamental aspect, they were always connected from the beginning with the affected country as well as with the Secretariat. We need to continue with the application of international procedures. In this context, a priority should be to assess the capacities of each country as well as to recognize and value that there were examples such as Costa Rica, who analyzed that they did not have possibilities to respond to the request, and remained on "stand-by"; yet, there were also other countries who arrived without the due coordination.

We can surely say that Ecuador was an important scenario to assess the significant strengths we have and to identify the issues to improve. It is clear that there is a need to evaluate the operation jointly with Ecuador so that it remains documented and published in our lessons learnt database on our website at www.insarag.org.



Photo: USAR teams – 18 april 2016 Portoviejo, créditos @UNGRD - Colombia

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Workshop on the proposal to elaborate an external support and validation process for national USAR team accreditation processes** was held in Colombia from 7-9 May. The outcomes will be shared in a formal document and shortly disseminated through the Focal Points of the Americas Region and the other Regional Groups.

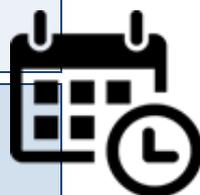
Focal Points in the region are kindly requested to complete the QUESTIONNAIRE sent on April, in order to carry out the **Regional Assessment of National USAR Capacities** as soon as possible. Colombia is leading the process in 2016.

The **SIMEX preparatory workshop** was held on 11-13 May in Bogota, Colombia. The products achieved were: SIMEX Agenda, key Objectives for each group of participants, timeline and definition of a roadmap with tasks and actions to complete.

On 28 June, the Ambassador of Colombia to the UN in Geneva organized and chaired a **briefing session for Permanent missions** on INSARAG activities in the Americas, with the participation of the Secretariat.

INSARAG REGIONAL CALENDAR confirmed dates

- ✓ INSARAG light teams working group, **15 - 17 June**, Geneva, Switzerland.
- ✓ Deadline to apply for the Regional SIMEX in Colombia: **5 August**
- ✓ Regional OSOCC operations course, led by CEPRENDAC, **14-19 August**, Costa Rica.
- ✓ OSSOC operations course for UNDAC regional team and support partners, **22-26 August**, Costa Rica.
- ✓ INSARAG Team Leaders' meeting, **7-9 Sept**, Tokyo, Japan
- ✓ Regional earthquake response' exercise – SIMEX, Bogotá, Colombia, **26-30 September**.
- ✓ Regional Group meeting and regional UNDAC consultation, **16-18 November**, Bogotá, Colombia



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“The earthquake response is an opportunity”

**By: Felipe Bazán Montenegro,
Deputy Secretary General of Ecuador’s Risk
Management Secretariat**

16 April 2016 is a date that marked Ecuador’s history during this century, with the 7.8 earthquake that struck the Ecuadorian coastline, affecting mainly the provinces of Manabí and Esmeraldas. Despite the toll left by the disaster, the capacity and support provided by the local and national actors, including the community, were crucial in the rescue of many lives. Nevertheless and despite the shock following the first hours of the event, the strong links that Ecuador maintains with the INSARAG network through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) not only allowed for a timely deployment of USAR and UNDAC teams, but were also fundamental for the management of the OSOCC platform, essential to monitor the arrival of international search and rescue teams and emergency medical teams.

However, and although it caused many lost lives and damages, the earthquake provides an opportunity to review and reformulate the protocols and procedure that will allow us to improve on the national and international response so that it be more efficient and timely in future; the primary goal being to save more lives and even go “beyond the rubble”, providing specialized international assistance that the country considers necessary in the moment.



Photo: Coordination Meeting of National USAR teams – 17 April 2016 Portoviejo, crédito: @Riesgos_Ec - Ecuador

World Humanitarian Summit

The Summit was held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 -24 May. The General Director of the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management- UNGRD- Carlos Ivan Marquez Perez, participated as a part of a high level roundtable: “Natural disaster and climate change: Risks and Crisis management in a different way” which was chaired by UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon. In addition, the Regional Chair participated as panelist in the side- event arranged by INSARAG and the Emergency Medical Team initiative, where he presented on: “National capacity strengthening based on international standards”. The presentation covered the key outcomes of the workshop on the proposal to establish an external support and validation process for national USAR team accreditation processes, held in May in Colombia.

“For INSARAG, this summit represents a very important scenario in the topic of risk management. We participated in the high-level roundtable on Disasters, specifically in Natural Events and Climate Change. The importance emergency preparedness work was stressed, as well as the role of countries in leading the response. Our job in the region is to continue implementing the INSARAG methodology, since the management of risk is key to reducing the vulnerability of countries and thus of communities” said Marquez Pérez.



Foto: Presidente Regional de INSARAG en Cumbre Mundial Humanitaria. 23 mayo 2016, Estambul, crédito @UNGRD - Colombia



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