



INSARAG Global Meeting 15-16 September, 2010

Kobe, Japan

Chairman's Summary

More than 200 participants from approximately 70 countries and 6 organizations working on urban search and rescue (USAR) gathered for the first ever global meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) in Kobe, Japan, from 14 to 16 September, 2010, thus making it the biggest conference ever organised by OCHA.

(The List of Participants is listed in Annex A)

This meeting was hosted by the Government of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and JICA) and co-organized by OCHA in its capacity as the INSARAG Secretariat which is located in the Field Coordination Support Section in the Emergency Services Branch of OCHA Geneva. The meeting celebrated the forthcoming twentieth anniversary of INSARAG and also commemorated the 15th anniversary of the Great Hanshin earthquake of 15 January 1995.

(The meeting agenda is in Annex B)

Regional Meetings on Day 1 (14 September 2010)

The milestone event saw very engaging discussions. On the first day, the three INSARAG Regional Groups met separately at the regional level and discussed key issues such as the INSARAG External Classification, establishment of INSARAG antennas, and development of guidelines for the capacity building of national urban search and rescue teams and the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration.

(The Chairman's Summary and Work-plan for 2010/11 for the 3 Regional Meetings are in Annex C)

The INSARAG Global Family Meeting Together on Day 2 and 3

(15 and 16 September 2010)

The second and third days brought all 200 delegates into 1 main plenary hall where the engaging topics from competent presenters from across the globe, covered the three key themes; namely USAR Preparedness, USAR Operations and Transition from USAR to relief.

Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Kenzo Oshima, Senior Vice President of JICA and UN former Under

Secretary General and Beat von Däniken, Deputy Head of Directorate and Chief of Staff Humanitarian Aid and SHA, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation were the key note speakers.

Greetings from the Secretary-General together with a video message from Ms Valerie Amos, USG for OCHA and the Opening Remarks by Rashid Khalikov, Director of OCHA Geneva, were warmly welcomed by the participants and they underlined the commitment of the UN to search and rescue efforts. Also, the successful performance of INSARAG teams in Haiti contributed to creating a positive atmosphere at the meeting.

The Following are Key Excerpts and Highlights from the Keynote Speeches and Messages for this Global Meeting:

From the Statement of Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General:

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today welcomed the decision of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) to hold its first-ever global meeting, saying there was “great scope” for using modern technology to help with rescue and relief efforts in the wake of major disasters.

In a message to the meeting, which opened today in Kobe, Japan, Mr. Ban noted that this year has already been marked a series of terrible natural disasters.

“I visited Haiti in the aftermath of the January earthquake and saw the devastation,” he said. “Yet I also witnessed many moving examples of bravery and selfless devotion to duty. Your impressive work saved many lives, including those of United Nations colleagues trapped under the rubble.”

The Secretary-General said INSARAG had “come a long way” since it was founded in 1991, and he welcomed its efforts to promote greater professionalism and coordination. “There is great scope for sharing lessons learned and using modern technology to provide even more effective support to affected communities and governments.”

(The Full Statement is attached in Annex D)

From Ms Valerie Amos, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator for the INSARAG Global Meeting:

"Disaster response is becoming more visible and complex and expectations of what we can do to help in such cases, are now much higher. INSARAG has shown how countries and organizations, responders and beneficiaries, can work together to develop professional standards in their field of humanitarian response. *It is a model of international co-operation from which we can all learn*"

From the Opening Remarks by the Chairman of INSARAG, Ambassador Toni Frisch of Switzerland:

Ambassador Toni Frisch, INSARAG Global Chairman, stressed the importance of this meeting as an occasion to take stock of what INSARAG has achieved and to prepare for new challenges. "The main objectives of this meeting will be to capitalise on the experiences of different regions of the world to facilitate the development of globally applicable best practices and to initiate greater awareness of the importance of urban search and rescue capacity building in developing countries as a primary component of disaster response preparedness leading to more effective risk reduction".

From Rashid Khalikov, Director OCHA Geneva:

"INSARAG has helped OCHA realize its mission to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors in order to alleviate human suffering. As recently illustrated at the response to the earthquake in Haiti, it was INSARAG who was on the ground first and started the roots of the coordination mechanism in the field which was then handed over to the UNDAC team and OCHA colleagues.

This has been a great example of continuous cooperation between INSARAG and OCHA since its establishment."

Global Meeting Outcomes and Summary of Action Points and Future Challenges for INSARAG

INSARAG has learned many lessons since its establishment and adapted herself to new challenges by developing new tools and improving its guidelines and methodology from experiences gained from every response and technological advancements in this field.

The following records the main Global Meeting Outcomes and Summary of Action Points and Future Challenges for INSARAG:

1. Building Collapse Research for Earthquake Disaster Mitigation

The session on the "E-Defense" Research facility - the world's largest "shaking table", a giant simulator creating realistic high level ground motions, allows for a full-scale experimentation of structures due to high-intensity earthquakes, with the aim of validating the effectiveness of retrofit techniques, and verification of new design and construction methods for enhanced capacity.

Researchers and Experts in the field of Structural and Engineering for Earthquake Disaster Mitigation will be invited to engage and share their findings with INSARAG.

Action : Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

2. Capacity Building “At All Levels”

The INSARAG USAR Capacity Building efforts led by the INSARAG Training Working Group(TWG) through the delivery of training for first responders and train- the-trainers have been successfully conducted in China and for ASEAN Member States.

The Global Meeting recognised the need for further strengthening of enhanced awareness raising especially within the countries vulnerable to emergencies. More attention should be given to the USAR capacity building in earthquake prone countries. It is hoped that efforts here will ensure a better response capability in the initial period directly following an earthquake ahead of the arrival of international USAR resources, where first responders are usually the internal community

The recommendation was made that capacity building projects are planned based on clearly defined outcomes resulting from OCHA lead fact finding missions. In this regard the delegates representing Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malawi and Bhutan requested assistance from the INSARAG community for technical advice and support to strengthening their USAR capacities.

Member States are further encouraged to use the guidelines for measuring national USAR teams, and adopt these standards at the national level. It cannot be overstated that the needs of developing countries have to be addressed in meeting the standards indicated in the INSARAG Guidelines. This will require additional support from donors.

Action : Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

3. INSARAG External Classification (IEC)

Another key achievement of INSARAG was the introduction of the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) process in 2005. This process has ever since facilitated capacity building and ensured minimum acceptable standards and matching capabilities to needs and priorities. The IEC remains a truly unique process that establishes verifiable operational standards through an independent peer review process that can be a great added value in response preparedness and at the times of response. In a world in which disaster response is becoming more complex, INSARAG has provided a commendable model to the rest of the humanitarian community. This is another example of capacity building.

To date, 15 teams have achieved the IEC Heavy standards and 5 teams have attained the Medium standards for international response, while another 21 teams are in the IEC queue till 2013. Currently most of these teams are housed in Europe with the exception of China, Japan, Singapore and UAE, there is a need from a global level strategic approach to ensure that there are professionally IEC certified teams all around the world in every region and specifically close enough to potential disaster prone areas.

All the members of INSARAG are encouraged to build up their capacities based on the INSARAG Guidelines and to ensure that their internationally deployable urban search and rescue teams undergo the IEC process to meet globally recognised standards.

The draft IEC Guidelines introduced in this meeting aims to assist countries and key stakeholders in planning for an IEC; feedback on the document can be directed to the INSARAG Secretariat before the 31 October 2010.

Countries in the IEC queue and interested USAR teams are requested to contact the INSARAG Secretariat for additional follow up and to attend an upcoming IEC to better understand the IEC requirements.

Action : Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

4. Strengthening Partnerships

There was a suggestion to forge closer partnerships between UNISDR and INSARAG through equipping first responders / strengthening immediate response capacity as a part of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction UNISDR's "Making Cities Resilient" Campaign.

Cities and local governments need to get ready, reduce the risks and become resilient to disasters. Opportunities will be explored on how UNISDR together with INSARAG can campaign together to better address this issue.

Action : UNISDR, Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

5. Lessons from the Padang, Indonesia and Haiti Earthquakes

Timely response, engaging closely with the national authorities, working alongside and supporting national response, and establishing key coordination mechanisms i.e. the Airport Reception and Departure Centre (RDC) and the On-site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) ahead of the arrival of international USAR teams, translates to efficient and effective response to a country affected.

The highlight in the meeting must definitely be "Emerging from the Rubble", where Mr. Jens Kristensen, a United Nations staff, recounted the 5 days spent entombed in the rubble and then afterwards embracing his rescuers from the United States in a symbolic way to resonate very clearly, the very reason for INSARAG – saving lives.

The Haiti After-Action-Review Report that came in the delegates pack contains the full details of the lessons learnt, recommendations and follow up work.

Action : Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

6. Partnerships, and Disaster Management in ASEAN

Forging strong partnerships with relevant stakeholders remain the backbone of INSARAG. Strategically it synergises INSARAG with other responding entities through standardization and harmonization of methodologies, and practices, while leveraging on the strengths each bring along.

ASEAN's sharing on their regional mechanisms and tools for disaster management highlights the need for member states to support one another and work within well accepted, tested and defined agreements, guidelines and SOPs in order to advance humanitarian action.

Action : Member States, UN Partners, INSARAG Secretariat

7. Transitioning from USAR to Humanitarian Relief Operations – “Beyond the Rubble”

Past experiences have shown that the USAR concept has evolved through the years. This has been most obvious at the recent earthquakes in Indonesia and Haiti. The international USAR teams increasingly have an expanded role in the response to earthquakes.

There were wide ranging views on this topic, since it is dependent very much on the sending Government's or sponsors mandate and resources available to commit to that particular disaster, beyond the life saving window in the first 7 to 10 days.

There is no doubt an increasing trend to integrate it with the larger humanitarian community, and to use the capacities of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams “beyond the rubble”. Increasingly, USAR Teams now, can offer other types of humanitarian assistance at the transition from the live saving phase to the relief phase of an emergency, with the objective of providing more help to the affected population.

Another example of its evolving role is also at the preparedness phase, where training and capacity building activities and initiatives takes place. This makes the added value of USAR teams more important than ever before.

It was also noted that the positive work of INSARAG needs to be further integrated into the greater UN coordination system by exploring how to support the clusters more so that the clusters can benefit from INSARAG's methodology and even adapt this methodology to its system.

A proposal was made to develop a working group on the issue of USAR teams “Beyond the rubble”. This working group will explore the issues closely and provide recommendations in an effort to make further progress in this area.

Action : Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

8. The “INSARAG Hyogo Declaration”

After much deliberation and discussions at both the regional meetings, of which brought out a number of key recommendations listed, the meeting unanimously adopted a declaration with recommendations on recognition and strengthening of international urban search and rescue operational standards. In the closing ceremony of the meeting, the signed copy of the “INSARAG Hyogo Declaration” was handed over to the Governor of Hyogo.

The crux of the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration on "*Recognition and strengthening of international USAR operational standards*" (See Annex D) is intended to encourage disaster affected countries to call upon the help of INSARAG teams for assistance and support. Disaster affected countries will also be advised to offer priority access to these teams as they are well equipped to make a real difference in the early life-saving search and rescue phase of an earthquake or other collapsed structure disasters.

It was agreed that the Permanent Representatives of Switzerland and Japan would work, in close cooperation with other Member States and the INSARAG Secretariat, for promoting the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration, by such a way of circulating it to the General Assembly, making reference to the relevant GA resolutions

As a follow up to the INSARAG Global Meeting, a member states briefing will be organised on 29 September 2010 in Geneva, Switzerland. The outcomes of the INSARAG Global Meeting and the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration will be shared at this meeting.

(The INSARAG Hyogo Declaration is in Annex E)

Action : Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

9. Next Global Meeting in 2015

The Government of United Arab Emirates (UAE) generously offered to host the next Global Meeting in Abu Dhabi in 2015.

Action : UAE, INSARAG Secretariat

10. Tenure of the INSARAG Chairman

Ambassador Frisch of Switzerland also confirmed his willingness to act as the INSARAG Chair for another 5 year term.

Action : Chairman INSARAG, Member States, INSARAG Secretariat

Conclusion

The Global Meeting was very well attended and allowed a fruitful exchange of experiences and views amongst delegates from across the globe. In the days and months to come it will be important to ensure a proper follow up of these discussions and in particular of the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration in order to assure its implementation.

- Ambassador Toni Frisch

INSARAG Chairman

27 September 2010