



**INSARAG IN THE AMERICAS
X MEETING OF THE REGIONAL GROUP
6-7 November 2011
Brasilia, Brazil**

Chairman Summary

The meeting of the INSARAG Americas regional group took place on 6 and 7 November in Brasilia, Brazil. The meeting was hosted by the USA and organised by the USAID-OFDA-LAC jointly with the National Civil Defence, the Civil Defence of the Federal District of Brasilia, the Brazilian Red Cross, the Fire-fighters of Brasilia and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its capacity as INSARAG Secretariat.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Humberto de Azevedo Viana Filho, National Secretary of Civil Defence of Brazil. In addition, the following persons gave opening speeches; Coronel Luiz Carlos Ribeiro da Silva, Assistant Secretary of Civil Defence of the Federal District of Brasilia, Ambassador Toni Frisch of Switzerland, INSARAG Global Chairman, Mr. Tim Callaghan USAID-OFDA, Chairman of the INSARAG Americas Regional Group, and Mr. Terje Skavdal, INSARAG Secretary, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The meeting brought together 106 participants from 18 countries, 14 of which represented by their INSARAG focal points, as well as 1 regional organisation (CEPREDENAC), PAHO, IFRC and the UN country team (UNETE), and OCHA. The INSARAG global chairman, Ambassador Toni Frisch from Switzerland also participated and the Africa/Europe/ Middle East Regional Group was represented by its upcoming chairman, Mr. Alexey Avdeev of Russia.

The following topics were discussed as part of the agenda of the meeting:

1. Review of INSARAG, including the structure and mandate of INSARAG, activities globally and at the regional level.
2. Review of INSARAG in the Americas
3. Review of action points from the last meeting of the Regional Group in 2010 and from the INSARAG Steering Group meeting in 2011
4. INSARAG website
5. Implementation of the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration in the Americas, with specific presentations by countries and sub-region
6. Mobilization, deployment and response experiences
7. Update on the IEC process (INSARAG external classification)
8. Role of the INSARAG focal points and virtual OSOCC
9. Update on the INSARAG working groups
10. Designation of the next Chair and Vice-chairs for 2012
11. Work planning of 2012 activities of the Regional Group
12. Announcement of international events by countries
13. Summary of the meeting

The summary of the meeting is below. All presentations as well as documents of the meeting can be found on the Virtual OSOCC (<http://vosocc.unocha.org>).



1. Review of INSARAG, including the structure and mandate of INSARAG, activities globally and at the regional level

Since the Regional Group has several national focal points recently nominated by their Governments, the INSARAG Secretariat briefly presented the structure and mandate of the INSARAG network as well as responsibilities of the main actors as mentioned in the INSARAG Guidelines, i.e. the affected country, the assisting country, the USAR teams, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its capacity as INSARAG Secretariat.

The Secretariat also presented the activities of INSARAG globally of the past year as well as key activities planned for next year. The Chair of the INSARAG Africa/Europe/ Middle East Regional Group, Mr. Alexey Avdeed of Russia, presented the activities of his Regional Group, and the Secretariat then presented the activities of the Asia-Pacific Regional Group.

2. Review of INSARAG in the Americas

The Chair of the Americas Regional Group, Mr. Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA presented a report on the activities of his Chairmanship, specifically on the work on supporting and strengthening national USAR capacities in the countries of the region.

3. Review of action points from the last meeting of the Regional Group in 2010 and from the INSARAG Steering Group meeting in 2011

The Chair of the Americas Regional Group, Mr. Tim Callaghan, presented a summary of the action points of the last Regional Group meeting and the steps that were taken for the implementation of each of the action points.

The INSARAG Secretariat then presented the action points of the INSARAG Steering Group meeting of February 2011 and the progress made since then. Specific emphasis was made on the adoption of the new version of the INSARAG Guidelines 2011, with the inclusion on the Chapter G on the development of national USAR capacities. The Guidelines (Chapter G.3.5) encourage countries to adopt the operational and organisational guidelines for capacity building of national USAR teams at the national level as target achievements for national USAR teams and recommend and to adopt appropriate processes for the confirmation of achievement of these standards.

4. INSARAG Website

The INSARAG Secretariat presented the new INSARAG website which is currently available at <http://www.advant.se/insarag/> until the final address is activated (www.insarag.org) planned for the end of the year.

Recommendation: Support by the members of the Regional Group is essential, in particular by the next Co-chairs and Vice-chairs to manage the Regional Group section of the website and to translate the website into Spanish and other languages, as required.



5. Implementation of the INSARAG Hyogo Declaration in the Americas

The following presentations were made:

- i. Regional USAR approach 2003-2011, Manuel Santana, USAID-OFDA
- ii. Progress of the USAR-Guatemala team, Sergio Cabañas, Operational focal point of Guatemala
- iii. USAR in Brazil, Paulo Jose Barbosa da Souza, Brazilian Red Cross
- iv. The implementation of a USAR system following INSARAG methodology in Chile, Cristóbal Goñi, Operational focal point of Chile
- v. Regional USAR strategy for Central America – PECUSAR, Juan Campos, Operational focal point of CEPREDENAC
- vi. Central American USAR Academy, Walter Fonseca, Operational focal point in Costa Rica

6. Mobilization, deployment and response experiences

The INSARAG Secretariat provided a brief introduction to the topic, recalling the specific characteristics of the emergencies in Japan and New Zealand with regard to USAR assistance, in particular the fact that both countries were very specific with their requests for assistance. One can note a tendency by which countries ever more want to be sure of the quality of the assistance received, and therefore request the support of INSARAG classified USAR teams.

Ramiro Gálvez, Fairfax, USA and Eduardo Hernández, Los Angeles Fire Department, USA, presented the mobilization and deployment experiences of their USAR teams respectively to the earthquakes of the Japan and New Zealand in 2011.

7. Update on the IEC process (INSARAG external classification)

The INSARAG Secretariat presented the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) system, its purpose and the tools that are being elaborated to guide USAR teams that are preparing for an IEC (e.g. the IEC Handbook).

Recommendation: The key priority of countries should be the development of national USAR capabilities, based on a study of expected national USAR requirements. Countries that plan to offer the assistance of their USAR team internationally are encouraged to sign up for the INSARAG external classification (IEC) process to ensure compliance with the INSARAG guidelines.

8. Role of the INSARAG focal points and virtual OSOCC

The INSARAG Secretariat underlined the importance of the INSARAG National Focal Points for the well-functioning of the network and specified their key responsibilities as described in the INSARAG Guidelines. It was stressed that the main function of the Focal Points is to ensure an efficient information exchange on INSARAG related issues, hence the importance of national authorities to decide on the most adequate institutions/persons to take on the role of Focal Points.



The Virtual OSOCC (VO) was presented and the importance of National Focal Points to be familiar with this tool. The VO is of key importance ensuring the exchange of information in real time during emergencies.

Recommendation: all Focal Points were encouraged to establish a Virtual OSOCC access account and to familiarize themselves with it to be able to use it in case of emergency. The use of Virtual OSOCC was also encouraged for preparedness activities such as meetings, simulation exercises, trainings, etc.

9. Update on the INSARAG Working Groups

The work of the three INSARAG Working Groups (WG) was presented:

- i. Training WG, Santiago Baltodano, USAID/OFDA, member of the WG
- ii. Medical WG, INSARAG Secretariat in the absence of a member of the WG
- iii. Operations WG, Sebastián Mocarquer, Chile, member of the WG

Participation of national experts in the WGs is dependent on the country's/institution's support. Experts participating in the WGs need to be proposed by their respective National Focal Points and supported by their institutions (travels to meetings, etc.). Participation from all three regions in the WGs is encouraged ensuring a good working atmosphere and cross-sharing of experiences.

10. Designation of the Chair and Vice-chairs for 2012

Mr. Terje Skavdal, INSARAG Secretary addressed the plenary by underlining that a change of leadership is always a challenge but also an opportunity. He paid tribute to the excellent work of Mr. Tim Callaghan as chair, and recalled that the INSARAG network in the Americas owes a lot of thanks to Tim Callaghan, the Government of the US through USAID/OFDA and the network of consultants. He further stated that INSARAG depends on leaders willing to invest in the network and the Secretariat was encouraged by the high interest of countries willing to participate in the leadership of INSARAG in the Americas.

Mr. Skavdal explained that the Secretariat has started work to better clarify the governance structure of INSARAG and, to the extent possible, harmonize the way the three regional groups are governed. He stressed that in the first 20 years of its existence, INSARAG has always managed by taking a pragmatic approach to governance issues, but with the growing participation of countries and organizations worldwide, there is a need to have clearer and more transparent rules. An options paper on this will be tabled for discussion at the upcoming INSARAG Steering Group meeting in February 2012 in Geneva.

Specifically on the Americas, Mr. Skavdal noted that the Regional Group has matured over the years with stronger country participation and ownership. The appointments of national focal points as well as the designation of two Vice-chairs in the 2010 meeting of the Regional Group have contributed a great deal to this. Following consultations between the current Chair, Vice-chairs and the Secretariat, it was decided to encourage a broader participation of the countries and a letter was sent to all focal points calling for interest to take on the role of Chair or Vice-chair of the Regional Group. Positive feedback was received from several countries, giving a lot of hope for the future.



The INSARAG Secretary also stressed that by bringing a new leadership to the Regional Group, expectations also need to be understood. These include the use of time and resources to support the INSARAG network at the regional level and globally. INSARAG depends on the activeness of its members, and particularly the Regional Chairs and Vice-chairs.

Having consulted with the countries that have shown interest to be part of the regional governance as well as with the INSARAG Global Chair, it was proposed to designate Costa Rica and Mexico as Co-chairs and Peru and Guatemala as Vice-chairs of the Regional Group for 2012. It was underlined that this might be seen as a transitional structure for 2012 until the overall future governance structure of INSARAG is clarified.

Mr. Tim Callaghan as Chair of the Regional Group underlined his satisfaction with so many countries showing interest in leading the work of the Regional Group and asked focal points to show their support for the solution proposed by the Secretariat.

The proposed Co-chairs and Vice-chairs were endorsed and focal points congratulated and showed their support to the new leadership of the Regional Group. All focal points also expressed their appreciation and thankfulness to Mr. Tim Callghan and USAID/OFDA for the immense work and support to the INSARAG Regional Group in the Americas, and expressed their confidence in continuing to work with Mr. Callghan and USAID/OFDA on USAR matters in the region. However, several focal points, including the focal points from Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Honduras, Ecuador, and El Salvador raised their concerns about the process by which the new chairs and vice-chairs were nominated, noting on the one hand that this is a transition period but also underlining the necessity for clearer and more transparent rules on the governance of INSARAG.

The Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Argentina stressed the importance of the representation of the sub-regions, in particular the Caribbean which is currently left out of the governance structure.

Decision: Costa Rica, represented by Mr. Sigifredo Perez, and Mexico, represented by Lic. Ana Lucia Hill, were designated as new Co-chairs of the Regional Group, with Peru, in the person of General Murgueytio, and Guatemala, in the person of Mr. Sergio Cabañas, being designated as Vice-Chairs.

11. Work planning of 2012 activities of the Regional Group

Mr. Callaghan initiated the discussion on the planned activities for the next year, by summarizing his commitments as chair still until the end of 2011. These include:

- The translation of the INSARAG guidelines into Spanish
- A final report on the achievements in his time as Chair of the Regional group, with an invitation to Lic. Ana Lucia Hill to come to Costa Rica early January 2012 to present the report to her and Sigifredo Perez and new Co-chairs of the Regional Group.
- Mr. Callaghan also noted that he will send a note informing all focal points on the designation of the new focal points from the US, James Fleming and Dewey Perks, USAID – Washington.



Costa Rica and Mexico added that one of their priorities will be to engage in the discussions on the governance structure to clarify procedures and mechanisms. Other priorities include the work on the INSARAG website, the translation of relevant documentation, as well as encouraging new countries to participate in the regional group. They also noted that they would like to seek the views of the focal points on the dynamics and objective of the next regional group meeting to optimize the utilization of time and resources.

Chile suggested emphasising more how the INSARAG network is supporting national institutions, rather than the other way around. It further recommended that the INSARAG network should be looking at quantitative analysis of its work (number of teams, of rescuers trained, number of rescues, etc.), showing with figures the impact of the work and being thereby able to compare from year to year.

Action: The incoming Co-chairs and Vice-chairs and the Secretariat to develop a work plan for 2012 and share it with the focal points for comments in the beginning of 2012.

12. Announcement of international events by countries

- Chile announced the holding of a USAR mobilization exercise in November 2012, and mentioned that it plans to invite 1 or 2 international USAR teams as well as to request the participation of an UNDAC team.
- Ecuador announced the planned organisation for February 2012 of a national USAR exercise, and also informed of its intention to establish a national USAR team, based on the INSARAG Guidelines and with the support of OFDA
- Guatemala announced its intention to organize with the support of OFDA a USAR training exercise for 2012, which would include the use of INSARAG procedures
- SDC mentioned its support for the construction of 3 exercise polygons in Peru. The project comes to an end this year but SDC will continue to support activities in the region, such as the Central American USAR Academy in Costa Rica.
- Peru offered to host the next Regional Group meeting in 2012 and in addition announced its intention to organise a regional meeting of national USAR team leaders as well as a national simulation exercise, inviting countries of the region in October/November 2012.

13. Summary of the meeting

The INSARAG Secretariat informed all participants that a draft summary of the meeting will be shared with the focal points present in the meeting for comments. One week time will be given to provide comments/corrections before finalizing the summary. Afterwards it will be sent to all focal points of the Regional Group and posted on the Virtual OSOCC so that all participants can have access to it.

Action: INSARAG Secretariat to finalise the summary and focal points to review it.



14. Acknowledgements

The INSARAG Secretariat and all participants of the Regional Group meeting would like to thank Mr. Tim Callaghan and USAID/OFDA for organizing and the Government of Brazil and all involved institutions for supporting the organization of the meeting.

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Annex

A. List of participants