

# 2013 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INSARAG Steering Group

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY  
Geneva, 7-8 February 2013



FIELD COORDINATION SUPPORT SECTION (FCSS)

Emergency Services Branch (ESB)

The annual meeting of the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) was held in Geneva from 7 to 8 February 2013. The ISG was convened in accordance with the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 16 December 2002 on “*Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International Urban Search and Rescue Assistance*”. Mr. Rashid Khalikov, Director of OCHA Geneva, opened the meeting which was chaired by Ambassador Toni Frisch, Chairman of INSARAG, and Mr. Terje Skavdal, Secretary of INSARAG and Chief of FCSS.

Ms. Catherine Bragg, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, delivered the keynote address on INSARAG and its role as an integral part of the international humanitarian emergency response.

A total of 98 participants and observers from 36 countries and organisations (Annex A) of the INSARAG system including INSARAG Regional Chairs and Vice Chairs, Working Group Chairs, National Focal Points and representatives from INSARAG External Classification (IEC) Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams as well as invited observer countries and organizations. OCHA's regional offices and ESB sections also participated.

The 2013 ISG meeting agenda (Annex B) was adopted.

The summary of recommendations from discussions at the regional and team leaders meetings in 2012 on the INSARAG Governance were shared with participants through the Virtual OSOCC in advance of the meeting. The IEC Annual Report 2012 and the discussion paper on the INSARAG Strategy were also made available on the Virtual OSOCC. A pre-ISG meeting teleconference amongst the INSARAG Regional Chairs and the INSARAG Chairman and INSARAG Secretariat also took place on 7 January 2013.

The ISG reviewed the action points of the 2012 ISG meeting and expressed satisfaction with their implementation.

Presentations were made by the INSARAG Secretariat and Regional Chairs to update the ISG on INSARAG activities in 2012. The decennial of UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 2002 in the margins of the ECOSOC in New York in 2012 was a milestone event for INSARAG. The Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos aptly summed up the association of INSARAG and OCHA in her key note address:

*“We are proud of our strong relationship with the INSARAG network, which we support in part through housing the INSARAG Secretariat inside OCHA. Your work is making a significant contribution to international coordination, by bringing together key actors to ensure an effective, timely, principled and coherent response to earthquakes and other disasters.”*

Further presentations were made by the chairs of the INSARAG Training, Operations and Medical Working Groups based on their annual reports available in the Virtual OSOCC for detailed review. In addition, a briefing was made by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the potential collaboration with INSARAG on response of certified medical trauma teams to sudden onset major disasters. The work entails active consultations with relevant stakeholders to align qualified foreign medical teams specialized in trauma care towards an improved coordination and quality of response. Additionally, this may eventually explore the certification of such teams to ensure that only teams that can make a value-added difference (as with INSARAG's IEC system) respond.

The INSARAG Governance findings and recommendations were positively received by the ISG. In-depth discussions on these recommendations took place through a series of open space thematic working groups covering different aspects of the Governance Review i.e. chairmanship, membership, decision making, methodology and funding.

The outcomes of the discussions are incorporated into an INSARAG Governance Matrix (Annex C) of proposed actions to carry the INSARAG review implementation forward.

# KEY POINTS

## 1. INSARAG Working Groups

The ISG appreciated the work of the INSARAG Working Groups and gave its support for the implementation of the proposals put forward by the working groups on Training, Operations and Medical taking into account feedback received during their reporting and work plans for 2013.

Recommendations:

- a) Operations Working Group (OWG) – The prolongation of the OWG work cycle till the INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting of September 2013 was welcomed. A smaller OWG team will support the implementation and roll out of the USAR Coordination Methodology in upcoming USAR exercises, and work with the TWG in the training development of this new concept;
- b) Medical Working Group (MWG) – To continue meeting in 2013 with engagements to support WHO's initiative on the area of suitable trauma response teams for a more efficient and synergized response to save lives in sudden onset disasters;
- c) Training Working Group (TWG) – TWG and OWG to continue in 2013 and to jointly develop relevant training programs for the USAR Coordination concept developed by the OWG. To support the IEC process in the conduct of the 2<sup>nd</sup> IEC Team Leaders and Mentors Course (venue to be identified, open to host countries with suitable field USAR work sites);
- d) More e-learning opportunities will be explored by all working groups;
- e) The Working Groups will support the work of the guidelines review;

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) supports the endeavours of the Working Groups and has made a standing offer to all Working Groups that avails its facilities for their work. The UAE also indicated their support to print the IEC/IER Handbook in English and to translate it into Arabic. The United States has recently made 700 copies of the INSARAG Guidelines available to the Secretariat.

## 2. The INSARAG External Classification and Reclassification system

Issues arising from the reporting of the IEC system:

- a) To indicate all INSARAG teams from the USAR directory, and not just IEC teams, on a map to provide a more balanced overview of USAR resources;
- b) UAE translated the IEC/R Checklist into Arabic. The UAE has also broken down the IEC/R Checklist into its components parts in an effort to overcome the language barrier and increase familiarisation with the Checklist. This broken down Checklist is not intended for use by classifiers but rather intended to assist teams preparing to undergo an IEC. The UAE has offered to make this available to the INSARAG Secretariat and other USAR teams;
- c) France announced their intent to put 2 teams up for IEC annually and to engage more extensively with INSARAG for mutual sharing of best practices and experience;
- d) Singapore welcomes the review of the INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) process taking note of the heavy financial burden on countries sending classifiers and for countries preparing for a resource intensive exercise. Singapore suggested that the team's commitment and engagement to INSARAG and their response to international disasters can be counted in this review. Singapore as chair of the INSARAG Asia-Pacific region, requested to participate in this review.

## 3. INSARAG Governance Discussions

An overview of the INSARAG Governance "Summary of Outcomes" can be found in Annex C. Additional comments include:

- a) Concerns from the NGO community on being excluded from the ISG; the NGO community argues that they should have a seat in the ISG;
- b) Switzerland suggests a bi-annual conference instead of the ISG to ensure inclusivity;
- c) IFRC welcomes more engagement, consultations and collaborations with INSARAG before committing to the ISG as an associated member; IFRC could also participate as an observer in INSARAG events;

- d) The Netherlands suggest the ISG meeting to encompass policy issues on day one and other general issues of INSARAG on day two;
- e) Iceland is of the opinion that while a conference is useful, issues of policy still needs to be brought up at the ISG for decisions to steer INSARAG forward;
- f) The United States (USA) stressed that the ISG is not a “team leaders” meeting; and that focal points need to play a role in areas of policy, funding, etc. and teams should be represented by their focal points. This is reinforced with a statement signed by their governments as part of the Abbreviated Portfolio of Evidence submitted for IEC consideration;
- g) Sweden suggested the need to ensure adherence to align the meeting agendas for both the ISG and regional level meetings;
- h) Australia supports the continuation of the MWG, given the on-going work with the WHO and on-going advancements in the medical field; and
- i) The USA supports the MWG and expressed agreement to Switzerland’s earlier comment that the working groups have to balance clear deliverables with time lines well adhered to;
- j) The USA also emphasised that INSARAG actions are to be guided toward the affected victim. The outputs of Working Groups will clearly be focussed on improving INSARAG’s response to saving lives and reducing suffering of victims in sudden onset disasters.

#### 4. INSARAG Guidelines Review

- a) The INSARAG Guidelines Review Process Terms of Reference and milestones were discussed (Annex D);
- b) It is timely to conduct the review of the INSARAG Guidelines 2015 version in accordance with decisions made in the previous INSARAG Regional and ISG meetings in 2012;
- c) The USA supports the review and the engagement of a suitable consultant to manage the documentation for the guidelines;
- d) The ISG supports the review and the nomination of Ambassador Manuel Bessler as the Chair for the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group;
- e) Germany supports the INSARAG Guidelines review and the nomination of Ambassador Manuel Bessler as the Chair of the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group and the nomination was seconded by USA;
- f) Singapore as the Chair of the INSARAG Asia Pacific Regional Group supports the review process and declares their commitment to participate in the review process.

Ambassador Manuel Bessler of Switzerland addressed the ISG; appreciating the trust put in him while noting that it is a huge undertaking ahead. He will look forward to put in place the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group together in the coming months and counts on the timely support of the Member States to contribute actively to the work of the review team.

#### 5. INSARAG in 2013 and Report by Member States

- a) A draft INSARAG Strategy Paper has been developed by the Secretariat at the request of the Chairman of INSARAG. The paper will be discussed at the INSARAG Regional Group and Team Leaders meetings in 2013 and the feedback will be incorporated appropriately into the final draft for the ISG 2014 and subsequently incorporated into the INSARAG Guidelines revision;
- b) The 2015 INSARAG Global Meeting initial consultations are underway with the host country, UAE. A first meeting between the Secretariat and the task force created by UAE will take place in mid-2013. UAE welcomes the INSARAG global community to the UAE in October 2015 for an eventful meeting;
- c) Hungary suggested to host a lessons learned seminar on their IEC/IER experience in May 2013 and welcomes the INSARAG community to participate. In response to this, the Secretariat suggested that the timings and financial costs by participating members may need to be considered; as such the venue and timing for this important event may need to be revisited, possibly coinciding with the INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting 2013;

- d) Qatar (observers) has requested for an IEC in 2014. Qatar fully supports the INSARAG system and offered to host the 2014 INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting. The announcement was welcomed by the ISG;
- e) Saudi Arabia announced their intention to request for an IEC in 2015;
- f) UAE offered to host the AEME Regional Earthquake Response Exercise in April 2014 and furthermore has offered to support the participation of selected disaster prone countries;
- g) Australia requests for a longer term planning / projection of INSARAG activities for support planning arrangements;
- h) Peru confirmed the hosting of the INSARAG Americas regional exercise in Lima from 1 to 4 October 2013;
- i) Costa Rica confirmed the hosting of the INSARAG Americas Regional Group Meeting in San Jose in November 2013 (27 to 29 November);
- j) IRO (by representative from Norway), welcomes the ISG to participate in the 14<sup>th</sup> IRO International Rescue Symposium (18 – 20 April 2013, Bucharest, Romania). The International IRO Rescue Dog Symposium serves as a platform for information exchange, continuing education and networking. This year's general theme is 'Worldwide collaboration between Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams and dog teams and facilitated by speakers from International Organisations, Government Agencies and NGOs. For further information and registration details please see [www.iro-symposium.org](http://www.iro-symposium.org)
- k) The latest FCSS calendar of activities can be found in the VOSOCC.

## Closing Remarks

The ISG expressed its thanks to the INSARAG Chairman, FCSS as the INSARAG Secretariat and to the presenters and facilitators and expressed appreciation for the interactive discussion format of the annual meeting.

Geneva, 8 February 2013