Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS)

INSARAG Steering Group Meeting, Geneva, 13-14 February 2014 Chairman's Summary



Overview

The meeting was opened by Ambassador Toni Frisch, Chairman of INSARAG, Mr Terje Skavdal, Secretary of INSARAG and Chief of FCSS, and Mr Rashid Khalikov, Director of OCHA Geneva.

The meeting was attended by 105 participants and observers from 43 countries and organisations (see Annex), including Regional Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Working Group Chairs, National Focal Points and representatives from classified teams, and observers. OCHA's Regional Offices and Emergency Services Branch (ESB) also attended.

Summary of presentations and discussions

INSARAG Report: Mr Skavdal reported that the regional troika management systems had been established, reflecting the growing importance of the Regional Groups. The Team Leaders Meeting in The Hague was attended by 133 participants – they discussed coordination methodology and their involvement with the Guidelines Review Group (GRG), and the Team Leaders stated that the new methodologies should be included in the INSARAG Guidelines.

Regional Groups' Report: The Americas announced that in 2014, there will be a Regional Earthquake Response Exercise in Costa Rica, while the Regional Meeting will be in Peru. AEME reported the establishment of a Gulf Coordination Council and Jordan (GCCJ) Sub-Regional Group serving the Arabic-speaking members. In 2014, AEME will hold an INSARAG Awareness Mission, planned for countries in the east of Europe, while the will be a Regional Earthquake Response Exercise in Turkey. AP announced a USAR assessment mission to Mongolia.

Virtual-OSOCC: Mr Thomas Peter presented an update on the Virtual-OSOCC, and confirmed the inclusion of the Virtual-OSOCC Guidance for USAR teams in the revised INSARAG Guidelines.

Strategy 2014-17: The meeting endorsed the new INSARAG Strategy 2014-17. The strategy outlines two goals and eleven objectives (see insarag.org for more details).

IEC/R system: Norway's status as being IEC-classified expired, and a government decision is pending as to next steps. The Secretariat reported improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the classification system through closer involvement of mentors, IEC team leaders and a more focused overview by the Secretariat. This has resulted in some teams that were identified as "not yet ready" to undergo classification.

The Secretariat thanked countries for supporting the peer-review process with suitable classifiers and noted the need to keep within reason the number of IEC teams from a single country, and to maintain a balance between what countries require from the network and their contribution to it. The Secretariat reported on a proposal from Singapore regarding the resources required and the financial burden of reclassification. The issue of ensuring that future reclassifications require less resources will be raised in conjunction with the guidelines review.

Working Groups' Report: The Chair of the Training Working Group (TWG) outlined their work in 2014 including clarifications to the IEC/R Checklist following feedback from mentors and IEC classifiers, and the framework of the technical Volumes II and III of the INSARAG Guidelines. Volume II will comprise of guidance and details of the work of INSARAG, and Volume III will be a pocket-size operational field guide. The TWG also noted, and will in 2014 look into, the development of new technologies that will potentially impact the work of INSARAG in both the operational environment (robotics, drones) and in the training environment (e-learning).

The Medical Working Group (MWG) updated on the development of guidance on USAR Operations in Extreme Environments, and the collaboration with WHO on the standardisation of Foreign Medical Teams (FMT) in disaster response. The MWG will support the GRG in developing the medical aspects of the revised INSARAG Guidelines, and has worked jointly with the TWG in its work on the IEC/R Checklist 2014. (Full reports by both working groups on vosocc.unocha.org).

Capacity building initiatives: On behalf of the Americas Regional Group, Peru updated on the regional capacity assessment of national USAR teams across the region. The purpose of the project was to assess the status and capacity of national USAR teams, thereby providing an informed basis for better planning and targeting of activities in the Regional Group. Chile offered to host a workshop focusing on USAR capacity building as well as the review of the relevant parts of the revised INSARAG Guidelines.

Switzerland updated, from a donors perspective, on its global capacity building projects. Details of projects in Armenia, China, India, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, and a six-county project in Central America illustrated the complexities and challenges associated with capacity building.

Guidelines Review Group Report: The Chair of the GRG, Ambassador Manuel Bessler (Switzerland), updated on progress made in revising the INSARAG Guidelines. The Guidelines will consist of three volumes: *Volume I: Policy, Volume II: Preparedness and Response*, and *Volume III: Field Handbook*. The meeting viewed the 3rd draft of Volume I and provided positive feedback. The timeline and methodology for the work of the GRG was outlined – drafts of Volumes II and III are expected by mid-2014, with comments accepted until October 2014. The GRG aims to present the Guidelines at the 2015 Steering Group meeting for endorsement, and to have them finalised and made available on different media platforms for the Global Meeting in October 2015. The Secretariat encouraged Member Countries to consider translating the revised documents into their respective languages.

Emergency Preparedness and Response Consultative Group: Mr Rudolf Müller (Chief, OCHA ESB) updated on the intention to create an Emergency Preparedness and Response Consultative Group. The Group will explore synergies and coordination opportunities between ESB's networks and other forums and networks.

Innovations and Partnerships: Mr Simon Eccleshall (IFRC) outlined the MoU between the IFRC and INSARAG, which centres on mutual support and information sharing. The MoU can be referred to at insarag.org.

Dr Ian Norton (WHO) outlined the collaboration with INSARAG on setting-standard and classification of FMTs. (The guidelines for FMTs are on http://www.who.int/hac/global_health_cluster/fmt_guidelines_september2013.pdf).

In preparation of their respective IERs, DEMA and USAR-NL sought cooperation to maximise mutual learning and development. The meeting noted that the organisations agreed to exchange mentors and run exercises together so as to reduce the cost of reclassification.

INSARAG Global Meeting 2015: Mr Mohamed Al-Ansari (UAE) welcomed Member States to participate and contribute in the 2nd INSARAG Global Meeting to be hosted by the UAE in Abu Dhabi from 18-20 October 2015. The meeting aims toward a new declaration, thus ensuring that INSARAG is in-step with the initiatives of the broader humanitarian community, and, hence, well positioned to continue to fulfil its role in saving lives.

Notable points from the Member States and partners

- China will undergo the IER and host a Regional Earthquake Response Exercise back-to-back in August 2014, as well as hosting the meeting of the AP Humanitarian Partnership in June 2014.
- Colombia expressed a willingness to become increasingly engaged in INSARAG activities.
- France expressed an interest to engage more actively with INSARAG, offering French versions of INSARAG documentation and expertise for future IEC/Rs, as well as announcing plans for a national INSARAG meeting in September 2014. France will host two IEC events in 2014.
- Poland offered to host an IER Workshop in 2014.
- Saudi Arabia announced that they are willing to provide training and meeting facilities for INSARAG events, and, pending a Government decision, to provide financial support to the INSARAG Secretariat.
- Singapore welcomed INSARAG teams to participate in the Singapore Global Fire and Paramedic Challenge in 2014 (see www.sgfpc.org).
- The Turkey-AFAD team announced that they have translated the INSARAG Guidelines into Turkish.
 Turkey will propose a second team for INSARAG Heavy Classification, as well as hosting the INSARAG
 Preparatory Workshop for the AEME Regional Earthquake Response Exercise from 17-19 June 2014, and hosting the exercise later from 19-21 November 2014.

- Qatar announced that the annual USAR International Team Leaders' Meeting will be held in Qatar from 22-24 September 2014.
- The UAE announced that it will host an IEC/R Team Leaders and Mentors Course and the Working Group meeting back-to-back (March 1-8, 2014) whilst also hosting the INSARAG Global Meeting in 2015.
- The International Rescue Dog Organisation committed to further support INSARAG capacity development efforts by providing search canines.

Closing statements

Mr Skavdal thanked Amb. Frisch for his sterling work as the Global Chair of INSARAG. Following that, Ms Kyungwha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General of OCHA, closed the meeting, thanking Mr Skavdal, who will be retiring later in 2014, for his distinguished work as INSARAG Secretary. Ms Kang stated that "INSARAG is a vital tool within OCHA's international humanitarian response," and that "its growing membership, increasing focus on preparedness and capacity building, and use of the peer reviewing is a model for others in the international humanitarian response community." Ms Kang concluded with the statement that "OCHA is very pleased with the continuing collaboration and commitment of INSARAG," before speaking of her personal appreciation for the work of Mr Skavdal during his term of office as INSARAG Secretary, and indeed for his contribution to OCHA generally.

Notable points going forward

The Steering Group meeting:

- i. Endorsed the INSARAG Strategy 2014-17.
- ii. Requested that teams that are part of the IEC/R system demonstrate commitment and engagement.
- iii. Welcomed the improved checklist for IEC/Rs in 2014 and reminded teams that it is a living document and therefore subject to further improvements.
- iv. Noted the need to manage a realistic number of teams within the IEC/R system and recommended that Member States adopt realistic international deployment aspirations and do not put an unnecessary strain on the IEC/R process. Also, suitable NGO teams should be considered for endorsement by Member States.
- v. Supported the proposal that the TWG and MWG continue to work in support of the GRG for 2014-15.
- vi. Noted the work of the working groups in compiling a library of reference material (available on insarag.org) and recommended that teams should use this material.
- vii. Recommended all Member States and organisations to seek partnerships at regional and national levels.
- viii. Commended the initiative of the USAR-NL and DEMA cooperation, and encouraged other teams to seek similar bilateral exchanges.
- ix. Welcomed the 3rd draft of the *INSARAG Guidelines, Volume I: Policy*, and endorsed the proposed timetable and scope for the review and editing process of the three-volume Guidelines, and recommended that Member States take ownership of the documents and provide feedback in accordance with the timelines set by the GRG. All three volumes of the INSARAG Guidelines will be tabled for endorsement by the Steering Group in 2015. Member States are strongly encouraged to translate these documents accordingly.
- x. Recommended that capacity building projects should note the lessons learned, and incorporate them into future capacity building projects which include:
 - a. Developing a knowledge base so as to enable the establishment of a baseline.
 - b. Ensuring continuity of personnel in projects as it is essential in developing donor-recipient relationships.
 - c. Noting that capacity building is a long-term commitment it is normal for projects to take 5-10 vears.
 - d. Ensuring that detailed planning is undertaken and that all technical and logistical challenges are met
 - e. Noting that realistic exercises are essential to developing real capacity in operational situations, but safety and security is paramount.
 - f. Ensuring that cultural aspects are respected.
- xi. Recommended that AEME and AP consider a regional assessment of national capacities, similar to that undertaken in the Americas, thus giving an overview of capacities and enabling better planning.

- xii. Recommended that capacity building focus on national capacities, at the first instance, over international.
- xiii. Supported the IER review and adoption of a "light touch" approach thus, the recommendations from the AEME Workshop should be included in the work of the GRG so as to be included in the revised Guidelines.
- xiv. Welcomed the INSARAG Global Meeting in 2015 to be held in Abu Dhabi. Regional Meetings will be held separately a day prior, followed by all participants coming together in plenary. Member States are strongly encouraged to support and contribute to this event.
- xv. Noted the wishes of Amb. Frisch to step down after the Global Meeting and for the INSARAG Secretariat and Regional Chairs to discuss and designate a Global Chair in accordance with the INSARAG governance criteria, and to report back on this at the Steering Group Meeting in 2015.

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