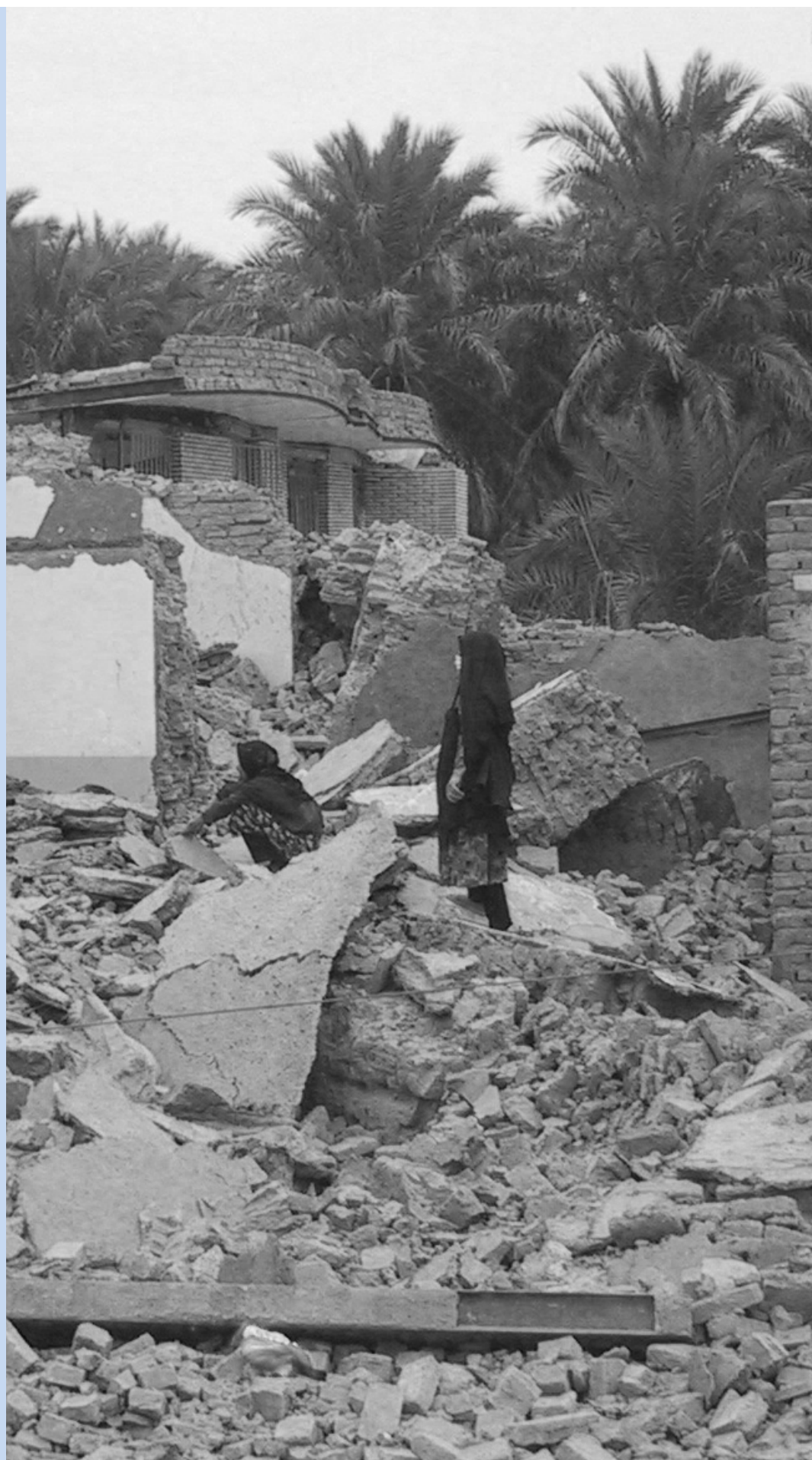


INSARAG

The Story of INSARAG 20 Years On...



INSARAG

The Story of INSARAG 20 Years On...



CHAPTER

PAGE

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"This publication was prepared to commemorate the Inaugural
INSARAG Global Meeting held from 14-16 September 2010 in
Kobe, Japan."

FOREWORDS	4
KEYNOTE ADDRESS	10
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION	12
THAT MOMENT...	14
A NEW ERA STARTS	16
AUTOMATIC ALERT AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS	18
THE INSARAG SECRETARIAT IN ACTION	20
INSARAG IN SUPPORT OF FIRST RESPONDERS	22
INSARAG COORDINATES ONLINE	24
A WELL-ESTABLISHED SYSTEM	26
COORDINATION IS THE KEY	28
LEARNING TOGETHER	30
GLOBAL APPROACH BASED ON COMMON STANDARDS	32
COORDINATION STARTS ON ARRIVAL	34
COORDINATING RESCUE OPERATIONS	36
SETTING MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS	38
FROM RESCUE TO RELIEF - "BEYOND THE RUBBLE"	40
FROM OPERATIONS TO LESSONS LEARNED	42
LEARNING FROM SHARED EXPERIENCE	44
HYOGO DECLARATION	46
HYOGO DECLARATION - SIGNING IN KOBE	48
INSARAG GLOBAL MEETING 2010 - GROUP PICTURE	49
CONCLUDING REMARKS - NEXT STEPS	50
FACES OF INSARAG - USAR OPERATIONS	52
FACES OF INSARAG - IEC	53
FACES OF INSARAG - PARTNERS	54
FACES OF INSARAG - SEARCH DOGS	55
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	56

A MODEL OF COORDINATION AND ACHIEVEMENT



OCHA is the United Nations body responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure an effective, principled and coherent response to emergencies. OCHA ensures coordination amongst all partners and provides a framework within which each actor can contribute to the overall response effort, necessary resources can be mobilized, and overall advocacy for humanitarian causes and principles can be carried out. As head of OCHA and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, my role is to bring together not only the response capacities of the United Nations system but also of the wider humanitarian community.

INSARAG – the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group – has been one of OCHA's major partners in disaster response for almost 20 years and is at the forefront of international relief efforts when earthquakes occur. INSARAG has made a major contribution to the overall international coordination system for which OCHA is responsible. It was INSARAG that triggered the creation of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system and developed the methodology for the On-Site Operations Coordination Centres and Reception/Departure Centres that are essential coordination tools of OCHA and its partners in sudden-onset disaster responses.

As the tragedy of Haiti in January so graphically illustrated, we cannot stop earthquakes. We cannot even accurately predict them. We have no choice but simply to be as prepared as we can to respond rapidly, anywhere in the world, to the particular kind of devastation they provoke – the brutal suddenness, the overwhelming infrastructure collapse, the brief window for survival and the highly-specialized equipment and personnel needed to effect rapid rescue operations. The aim is to save lives and reduce the impact, in a context where logistical and other challenges are enormous.

This is the role of INSARAG. In all major collapsed structure disasters, they are there. They are the experts, they move fast, they have the technology, equipment and skills and, importantly, the methodology for operational coordination and primary relief activities, not only during the critical, life-saving phase, but beyond, in performing first damage assessments, providing medical support, carrying out structural assessments and assisting with rubble removal. They work hand-in-hand with local responders, supporting their rescue activities and adding specialized equipment, knowledge and experience wherever possible. They are ready 24/7. They work swiftly but carefully, knowing that lives depend upon them. Their achievements in Haiti were remarkable – 132 survivors pulled from the rubble, in some cases even after all hope had effectively been abandoned.

When they are not responding to disasters, the members of INSARAG's international USAR community are preparing. They train, they evaluate, they learn lessons, they help build capacity, they improve their methodology. The key is to respond even better next time, to save more lives.

INSARAG's leading role and methodology have been recognized in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 57/150 on "Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International Urban Search and Rescue Assistance". More recently, the introduction of the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) process in 2005 has been key to developing capacity, ensuring minimum standards and matching capabilities to needs and priorities. In a world in which disaster response is becoming more visible and more complex and expectations ever higher, with justifiable demands for accountability and standards, INSARAG has provided a commendable model of international cooperation. It has shown how countries and organizations, responders and beneficiaries, can work together to develop commonly-accepted professional standards in their field of humanitarian response.

I, therefore, urge all UN Member States to build up their USAR capacities based on the INSARAG Guidelines and to ensure that their international teams undergo IEC classification to meet internationally-recognised standards. I also urge disaster-affected countries to call upon INSARAG IEC-classified teams when disaster strikes, to ensure that they receive the highest standards of professional USAR assistance.

INSARAG's next challenge is to ensure that international USAR teams, with their extended capacity and assets "beyond the rubble", can effectively meet growing future needs. I believe that they can and will do so. Building on the experience of the past 20 years and the notable successes in Haiti and elsewhere, I am confident INSARAG will fly its flag even higher and accomplish even more in future decades.

John Holmes
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator
United Nations Office for the Coordination
of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

LEARNING FROM THE PAST, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



In December 1991, in the Report of the Inaugural Meeting of the International Search & Rescue Advisory Group, having just been elected as the first Chairperson of INSARAG, I made the following comment in a section sub-titled “Now the real work of INSARAG must begin”:

“We have taken a decisive step towards improving the coordination of international rescue operations after earthquakes... We know that this is a major challenge and that it will take time to achieve our goal.”

This was our first meeting, convened under the auspices of what was then the United Nations DHA-UNDRO¹ and held in Beuggen, Germany. We were 35 delegates from 15 countries and 7 organizations². We had come together in the wake of the 1988 Armenia earthquake, all experts in our particular field, all mindful that our technical knowledge and resources could bring much needed support to a country devastated by a major earthquake. Experience had shown that an effective system of operational coordination was sorely needed to maximise our relief activities, enable us to work together to standard procedures, to save time, to save lives.

At that meeting, we agreed the INSARAG Mandate – 8 points which summarized our aims in developing greater efficiency in USAR disaster response. We established the structure which continues to this day - the Steering Group, the Regional Groups – and we set in motion the processes which would eventually lead to the development of the INSARAG Guidelines, to UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150 in 2002, to the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) - an international system of peer evaluation and classification of USAR response capacity - and to a membership that encompasses more than 80 countries and organizations today.

Our membership embraces not only the countries possessing the sophisticated technical resources and the expert skills needed to carry out large-scale international USAR operations; it has always included those countries who are the most vulnerable, who are in the front line of earthquake response. In a major disaster, no help is as efficient as that which is available locally and the

INSARAG network has developed hand-in-hand with all partners to develop capacity and promote cooperation amongst all levels of responders. We have worked together for almost 20 years now, in Japan, Iran, Colombia, Turkey, Greece, India, Peru, El Salvador, Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, China, Indonesia and Haiti. There will be more; we will be ready.

As we move forward into our 20th year, new challenges await us. The wider role of USAR teams “beyond the rubble” is now recognised as key in the immediate aftermath of a collapsed structure catastrophe. We must meet these changing needs and adapt to new working environments with the same efficiency and professionalism that has made INSARAG a model for the humanitarian world.

This Global Meeting – the first to bring together all the INSARAG family since its inception in 1991 – is the occasion for us to take stock of what we have achieved, to build on our successes, to prepare for new challenges, and to commit to continue our work together into the future, all the better to save lives, to bring relief, to reduce suffering.

In December 1991, at that Inaugural Meeting, we began a process that has made a genuine difference to saving lives in collapsed structure disasters. Yes, it has been a major challenge and, yes, it has taken time to achieve our goal. We may be proud of how far we have come - and must be determined to go even further.

My thanks to you all for being part of INSARAG.

Ambassador Toni Frisch
INSARAG Global Chairman

¹ United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs-United Nations Disaster Relief Organization

² Algeria, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA, UNDRO, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPRENAC), International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO), International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) & Partners of the Americas.

FOREWORD

SHIRO SADOSHIMA



Let me congratulate for the INSARAG Global Meeting 2010. It is our great pleasure and honor to host this memorable, first global-level meeting within the INSARAG framework.

The Global Meeting 2010 has two important roles. The first one is to identify major achievements during twenty years since the establishment of INSARAG and challenges ahead of us for further improvement through discussion among members from all over the world. The other one is to disseminate such achievements and challenges to the world from Kobe, which was hit by "the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake" in 1995. This year marks the 15th anniversary of this massive earthquake.

INSARAG has made significant achievements since its creation in 1991, by establishing standards for international USAR teams and elaborating methodologies for international coordination in earthquake response. It is most remarkable that INSARAG introduced the USAR Guidelines and INSARAG External Classification (IEC) based on the said Guidelines. Until now, a total of 19 USAR teams have successfully met the IEC criteria and were classified as INSARAG Heavy or Medium team. Japan Disaster Relief Teams (JDR) was classified as Heavy last March. The increasing number of countries and USAR teams which are interested in the IEC shows that INSARAG activities enjoy good reputation among international society.

Japan, one of the most disaster-prone countries, has made strenuous efforts in disaster response and disaster prevention. Since implementation of "Law concerning Dispatch of the Japan Disaster Relief Team" in 1987, Japan has dispatched for 105 JDR Teams in total, including 14 Search and Rescue team, to the countries and areas affected by major disasters all over the world. Japan has been actively participating in the INSARAG activities such as meetings, trainings, IEC, etc. Hosting the Global Meeting is part of our commitments to international coordination in disaster response.

Japan does not only focus on disaster response, but also on the preventive side of disaster risks. Based on the knowledge and technology that Japan has fostered through its experiences from numerous, serious disasters, Japan supports other countries in disaster prevention through 1) multilateral cooperation through international organizations, 2) promotion of regional cooperation in Asia, and 3) bilateral cooperation through ODA.

In 2005, Japan hosted the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) in Kobe, which led to the adoption of the "Hyogo Framework of Action 2005-2015", a guideline that gathers up priorities of the disaster reduction measures that each country and international organization should carry out throughout the decade. In this way, Japan strives to correspond to each phase of disaster management in a comprehensive manner.

This booklet prepared by OCHA is the most useful and practical compilation of the twenty years' efforts made by INSARAG. It will give us the excellent basis for us to take steps forward in furthering disaster response and management.

Shiro Sadoshima
Director-General
International Cooperation Bureau
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

KEYNOTE ADDRESS KENZO OSHIMA



On behalf of JICA, it is my great pleasure to welcome all the participants to the first INSARAG Global Meeting held in Kobe, Japan. I attend this meeting with special sentiment because I once served in the United Nations Secretariat in charge of the issue (as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) and during my tenure Resolution 57/150 "Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International Search and Rescue Assistance" was adopted at the General Assembly on December 16, 2002. The Resolution, adopted unanimously, marked a milestone in recognizing the critical role of the INSARAG and its guidelines in international search and rescue, which continue to serve as the main tool and a basic instrument of reference in further developing and refining our work in this area.

One of the major achievements of INSARAG since the adoption of Resolution 57/150 consists of putting into place the minimum standards for internationally deployed Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams through the INSARAG Guideline and External Classification (IEC) system. It is gratifying that the value of the IEC is becoming widely acknowledged and appreciated, as evidenced by an increasing number of USAR teams on the classification waiting list. There are now 19 teams classified as "Heavy" or "Medium" since the beginning of the IEC in 2005.

For my country, I'm pleased that Japan's Disaster Relief team (JDR) submitted itself to the IEC process in March 2010 and was successfully enlisted to the "Heavy" USAR team category. The entire process that constituent members of the JDR Team had to undergo in meticulously preparing for the IEC was exacting but at the same time highly beneficial, particularly in deepening the understanding of the INSARAG Guidelines and also reaffirming their effectiveness. This no doubt will contribute to enhancing the capacity of the JDR team and improving the quality of its activities in its future deployment to the affected areas. With this recent experience by the JDR Team and the new confidence gained in the process, it is JICA's intention, as the agency responsible for JDR's operational management, to ensure that it will not only maintain high skill levels and team capacity, but also spare no effort in improving them wherever possible.

Unfortunately, large-scale natural disasters such as earthquakes continue to strike different regions of the world, causing enormous loss and damage to human life and property almost every year. The Padang earthquake in Indonesia in 2009 and that of Haiti this year, for example, are fresh in our minds.

Every time such natural calamities occur, the essential need for an effective international coordination mechanism in international emergency response is acutely felt, hence the need for reinforcing the role of INSARAG. Due, arguably, to the impact of the climate change, other types of natural disasters and weather extremes – hurricanes/cyclones/typhoons, floods, mudslides, forest fires, droughts, etc. – are ominously on the rise, demanding more, faster and resilient delivery of relief and assistance to those in need. The successful experiences of INSARAG should be shared with the expanded community of disaster response and that of humanitarian assistance in order to better cope with the unprecedented occurrences of such events.

I hope this INSARAG Global Meeting will be a valuable opportunity for the international community as a whole – concerned organizations and agencies, assisting countries, disaster-affected countries alike – to reaffirm the positive role played by INSARAG so that timely and effective assistance can be delivered to the peoples and communities in times of need.

Kenzo OSHIMA
Senior Vice President
JICA

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 57/150 of 2002

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57/150. Strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance

The General Assembly, Reaffirming its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, the annex to which contains the guiding principles for strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system, and its resolutions 54/233 of 22 December 1999, 55/163 of 14 December 2000, 56/103 of 14 December 2001 and 56/195 of 21 December 2001, and recalling agreed conclusions 1998/1³ and 1999/1⁴ of the Economic and Social Council and Council resolution 2002/32 of 26 July 2002,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development⁵,

Deeply concerned by the increasing number and scale of disasters, resulting in massive losses of life and property worldwide, as well as their long-term consequences, especially severe for developing countries,

Reaffirming that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and, in this context, humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and, in principle, on the basis of an appeal by the affected country,

Reaffirming also that each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory and, hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory,

Recognizing the importance of the principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality for the provision of humanitarian assistance,

Emphasizing the responsibility of all States to undertake disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts in order to minimize the impact of disasters,

Noting the critical role played by local rescuers in natural disaster response as well as existing in-country capacities,

Emphasizing the importance of timely, coordinated and technically sound international assistance provided in close coordination with the receiving State, in particular in the field of urban search and rescue following earthquakes and other events resulting in structural collapse,

Noting with appreciation, in this respect, the important contribution made by international urban search and rescue teams in the aftermath of disasters, which has helped to reduce loss of life and human suffering,

Commending the work of the United Nations Disaster Assistance and Coordination teams in facilitating rapid need assessments and assisting Member States to organize the on-site coordination of international urban search and rescue operations,

Concerned at the procedural requirements applicable to the movement of foreign nationals and equipment to and within a country that may impinge on the timely acceptance, deployment to the disaster site and activities of international urban search and rescue teams,

Also concerned that an additional burden may be placed on the resources of the affected countries by those international urban search and rescue teams which are inadequately trained or equipped,

Noting the efforts made by Member States, facilitated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of international urban search and rescue assistance,

Noting also that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is identifying the current state of international law relating to disaster response for a report to be submitted to States and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 2003, and emphasizing the need for intergovernmental oversight of this process, particularly with regard to its principles, scope and objectives,

Recognizing, in this regard, the Guidelines developed by the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, as a flexible and helpful reference tool for disaster preparedness and response efforts,

1. Stresses the need to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of international urban search and rescue assistance, with the aim of contributing towards saving more human lives;

2. Encourages efforts aiming at the strengthening of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and its regional groups, particularly through the participation in its activities of representatives from a larger number of countries;

3. Urges all States, consistent with their applicable measures relating to public safety and national security, to simplify or reduce, as appropriate, the customs and administrative procedures related to the entry, transit, stay and exit of international urban search and rescue teams and their equipment and materials, taking into account the Guidelines of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, particularly concerning visas for the rescuers and the quarantining of their animals, the utilization of air space and the import of search and rescue and technical communications equipment, necessary drugs and other relevant materials;

4. Also urges all States to undertake measures to ensure the safety and security of international urban search and rescue teams operating in their territory;

5. Further urges all States that have the capacity to provide international urban search and rescue assistance to take the necessary measures to ensure that international urban search and rescue teams under their responsibility are deployed and operate in accordance with internationally developed standards as specified in the Guidelines of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, particularly concerning timely deployment, self-sufficiency, training, operating procedures and equipment, and cultural awareness;

6. Reaffirms the leadership role of the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator in supporting the authorities of the affected State, upon their request, in coordinating multilateral assistance in the aftermath of disasters;

7. Encourages the strengthening of cooperation among States at the regional and subregional levels in the field of disaster preparedness and response, with particular respect to capacity-building at all levels;

8. Encourages Member States, with the facilitation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and in cooperation with the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, to continue efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of international urban search and rescue assistance, including the further development of common standards;

9. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, a comprehensive, updated report with recommendations on progress in the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of international urban search and rescue assistance, taking into account the extent of utilization of the Guidelines of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group.

75th plenary meeting
16 December 2002

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³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 3 and corrigendum (A/53/3 and Corr.1), chap. VII, para. 5.*

⁴ *Ibid., Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/54/3/Rev.1), chap. VI, para. 5.*

⁵ *A/57/578.*

+00 minutes

That moment...



THAT MOMENT...

People outside heard a low rumbling sound, which increased in volume and intensity. The people inside became aware only when the building they were in suddenly shook. Too late and without warning the disaster was upon them.

"Suddenly, the desk where I put my laptop began shaking. After several seconds my laptop started to jump up and down; it was like there were magic hands moving it. We gathered together close to the exit to the stairs and found that we could not move anymore because the building, which we were in, was shaking so strongly that we could not even stand."

Gao Li Qiang. Wenchuan Earthquake, China, 2008.

As the earth shook and people struggled to keep their balance, buildings started to fall as a pall of dust rose into the air. The noise was deafening, glass and debris falling into the streets as people ran for their lives.

"The shock came and hurled my bed against an opposite wall. The shock was constantly growing heavier, rumbles, crackling noises and falling objects. It grew constantly worse, the noise deafening; the crash of dishes, falling pictures, bookcases being overturned, the groaning and straining of the building itself, broken glass and falling plaster, made such a roar that no one noise could be distinguished. I never expected to come out alive."

Emma M. Burke. San Francisco Earthquake, USA, 1906.

As quickly as it came, the shaking stopped and the noise subsided. A deathly hush descended on the town as people struggled to their feet and looked around at the devastation that nature had wrought in less than a minute. Slowly the quiet was replaced by shouts and the sounds of screaming in the streets.

"I felt that the door was too far away, so in the last split second I decided to jump under the table instead of running for the door and miraculously it was the right decision to do, because had I run for the door, I would have been smashed. I would have been killed."

Jens Kristensen, MINUSTAH/Civil Affairs, Haiti

Iran earthquake, 2003.
© UNDAC



Turkey earthquake, 1999.
© Dave Dickson



Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© Emerson Tan

+10 minutes

Communities
respond



As the dust from earthquake damaged buildings slowly begins to settle and clear, passers-by, neighbours and those not injured start to recover from the shock and the reality of what has happened. They begin the uncoordinated rescue of family and friends trapped in buildings less obviously damaged. The unnatural and disturbing silence that immediately followed the earthquake is broken as shouts and screams fill the air, the survivors calling for help, being answered by those able to help.

A NEW ERA STARTS

In 1991, following a series of destructive earthquakes (Mexico 1985 and Armenia 1988), a report from the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies identified a growing need for international resources to respond to similar disasters and more importantly for better coordination between the affected Government and search and rescue organisations. The report stated that "not only was there a lack of coordination between international teams on the ground, but often the local authorities had no idea what the specialist teams were capable of, what equipment they had brought with them and even which teams had actually arrived".

The report identified a number of key characteristics of an effective international team. It listed skills and equipment to locate and extricate trapped persons, medical knowledge and equipment, self-sufficiency and the ability to arrive quickly, preferably within 48 hours of a disaster.

The report recommended establishing effective international response teams and coordination. It also emphasized the importance of the role that communities play in disaster response and the need for preparedness programmes that would ensure communities were better equipped and prepared when disaster struck.

Following these major earthquakes, together with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies report, an International Search and Rescue Workshop was convened by the Department for Humanitarian Affairs-United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation (now the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - OCHA). This workshop paved the way for the inaugural meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).

The INSARAG inaugural meeting was hosted by the German Government in Beuggen, from 11-13 December 1991. It was attended by 35 delegates from 15 countries and 7 international and non-governmental organizations. At the meeting, significant and far-reaching recommendations were made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of international relief operations.

At the time, it was recognized that the formation of INSARAG was an important contribution to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990 – 2000). It was also recognised that INSARAG's work would be important not only to disasters in the urban environment, but also to emergency management in general.

The meeting established the mandate for INSARAG and set out the basic structure, which is still used today. The meeting established

Quotations from Walker, P. "International Search and Rescue Teams: A league discussion paper" (League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva: March 1991).

"The aim of INSARAG or rather of the countries and organisations that it comprises, is to enhance the quality of aid given after natural disasters."

Ambassador Toni Frisch, INSARAG Chairman

the concept of the INSARAG Steering Group, the regional groups and the ad hoc working groups. Mr. Toni Frisch (Switzerland) was elected as the Chairperson. Under his leadership, the meeting made important recommendations as to the establishment of an On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC), urban search and rescue (USAR) working procedures, standard terminology, the capability of USAR teams and the role of UNDRO (now OCHA) in the provision of a secretariat for the newly formed group. The meeting was also instrumental in creating the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system, which is the key tool for coordination in sudden-onset disaster situations.



INSARAG meeting in Austria, early 1990s. © AFDRU



The report of inaugural meeting of INSARAG in 1991.
© OCHA



INSARAG founding member Joe Bishop, OCHA staff Fabrizio Gentiloni and Ola Almgren at a demonstration during an INSARAG meeting in Austria, early 1990s.
© AFDRU

+15 minutes

*The World
is alerted*



Around the globe, sensor systems detected the earthquake as it happened, recording the location of the epicentre and its severity or magnitude. Computer software receives this information and calculates the location of the epicentre and its magnitude, transmitting this information to national governments and to the international disaster response community, thereby setting the whole response mechanism into effect.

AUTOMATIC ALERT AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) captures scientific data from seismological institutions and automatically calculates the possible impact of the disaster on the affected population, taking into consideration factors such as population density, vulnerability, resilience, etc.

If the estimated impact reaches a pre-defined threshold, GDACS sends automatic alerts by e-mail and SMS to its subscribers and publishes detailed results of the impact estimation at <http://www.gdacs.org>. GDACS provides similar services for other disasters such as volcanoes, storms and floods. Its automatic alert and impact estimation service is freely available on the internet to the general public.

Once the automatic alert has been sent, and the disaster impact has been calculated, GDACS activates its dedicated internet platform for coordination and information exchange among international responders through the Virtual OSOCC at www.gdacs.org/virtualOSOCC. This is to fill the critical information and coordination gap that usually occurs in the first phase after major sudden-onset disasters, before conventional international information and coordination systems have been activated.

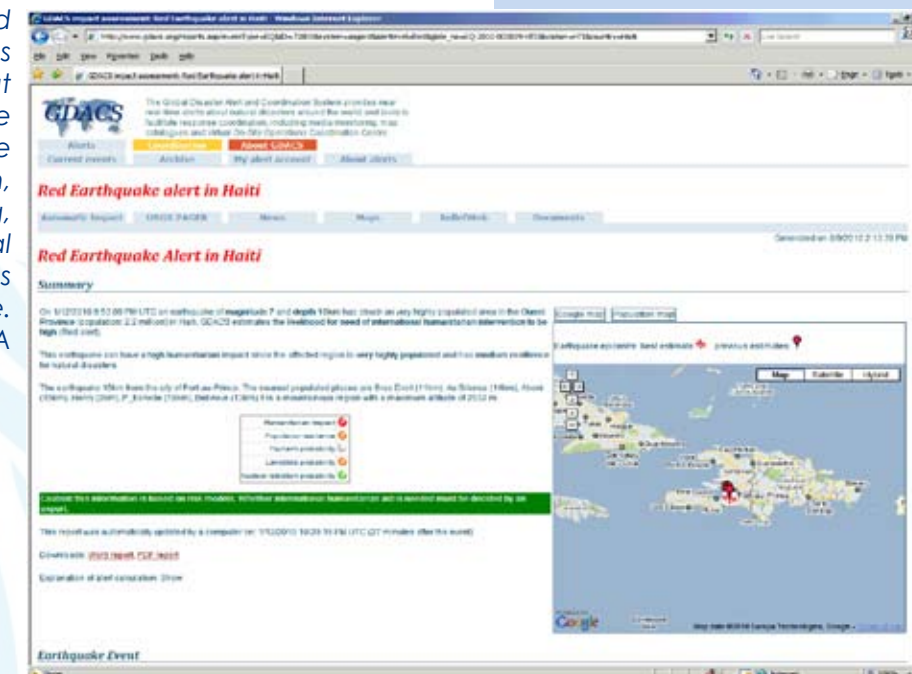
To facilitate access to related information, GDACS/Virtual OSOCC also automatically integrates information from other sources, such as maps (UNOSAT) and disaster reports (ReliefWeb). GDACS/Virtual OSOCC is accessible (password protected) only to disaster managers in governments and response organisations worldwide, and currently has over 11,000 subscribers.

Through GDACS/VirtualOSOCC, international responders regularly receive and produce situation updates and inform others about their planned response, thereby drawing on the collective knowledge of the international disaster response community to facilitate decision making and to coordinate international bilateral response.

“Timely and reliable earthquake alerts and automatic impact estimations are essential in modern disaster management, but in the first chaotic phase after a disaster, instant, direct, and informal information exchange among disaster managers worldwide is increasingly vital for international coordination, decision making and more appropriate response”.

Thomas Peter, Manager Emergency Relief Coordination Centre, OCHA Geneva

The Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System provides near real-time alerts about natural disasters around the world and tools to facilitate response coordination, including media monitoring, map catalogues and Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre.
© OCHA



The ERCC Manager at a briefing of GDACS. © OCHA



*OTF (Operations Task Force) meeting at OCHA Geneva after disaster strikes.
© OCHA*

+20 minutes

International coordination starts



The INSARAG Secretariat, alerted by alarms from various resources including GDACS, starts collecting and confirming information regarding the severity and extent of the earthquake and makes contact with the relevant authorities and partners in the affected country. The information collected is analysed and provided to the international community of search and rescue teams and other interested organisations. The information collection and sharing process is crucial, particularly in providing guidance for the USAR teams in support of their decision-making processes, as they consider not only the potential added value of a deployment to the affected disaster, but also what will be the extent of that deployment in terms of personnel, equipment and the length of the deployment. .

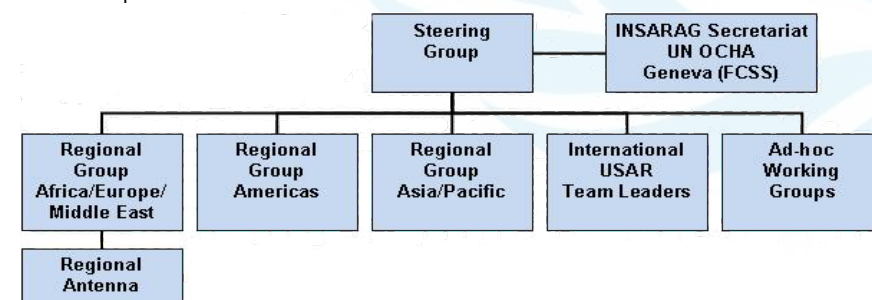
THE INSARAG SECRETARIAT IN ACTION

Since the inception of INSARAG, the Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) within the Emergency Services Branch (ESB) of OCHA Geneva has functioned as the INSARAG Secretariat.

The INSARAG Secretariat is the hub of all INSARAG activities world-wide. It has both operational and administrative responsibilities. In an operational context, the Secretariat has the critical role of coordinating the response of the INSARAG community and managing relevant information through tools such as the Virtual OSOCC. The INSARAG Secretariat is also responsible for contacting the disaster affected country. In its administrative role, the Secretariat assists with the preparation and conduct of the meetings of the INSARAG Steering Group, regional groups and INSARAG team leaders. A key responsibility is to provide assistance to the INSARAG Chairperson, Regional Chairpersons and Chairpersons of INSARAG working groups, bringing together the agreed work plans and coordinating the overall calendar of events and activities. The Secretariat manages the USAR Directory, which is an extensive database of global USAR teams. It ensures all this information is current and relevant when a disaster strikes.

Through tools such as the Virtual OSOCC, the Secretariat manages the process of maintaining and updating INSARAG's extensive document library, including the INSARAG Guidelines.

The INSARAG Secretariat has the role as the facilitator for USAR related capacity building projects in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 2002. The resolution "Encourages the strengthening of cooperation among States at the regional and sub regional levels in the field of disaster preparedness and response, with particular respect to capacity-building at all levels". In this role, INSARAG Secretariat facilitates the process of capacity building initiatives by contacting the potential recipient country, assessing the capacity and sharing the results with interested donors (like in the example of Pakistan after the 2005 earthquake). The Secretariat also plays a pivotal role in facilitating the INSARAG External Classification Process (IEC), supporting participating organizations and classifiers and maintaining an overview of the IEC schedule. It is the final arbiter in all matters related to the IEC process.



"The INSARAG Secretariat functions as well as it does only because of the commitment and support provided to it by the international USAR teams in terms of professional and technical advice, resources and ensuring support for it within their national governments. That is what INSARAG is all about: partnership and collective effort to improve preparedness and response."

Arjun Katoch, former Chief of FCSS, OCHA Geneva



FCSS staff facing many challenging issues at every mission.
© OCHA



FCSS staff meeting during Turkey earthquake of 1999.
© OCHA



Intensive preparations and discussions to coordinate the incoming USAR teams, UNDAC team and other relief actors by FCSS staff.
© OCHA



The deployment of an UNDAC team to Turkey earthquake of 1999 being discussed by the FCSS Staff.
© OCHA

+30 minutes

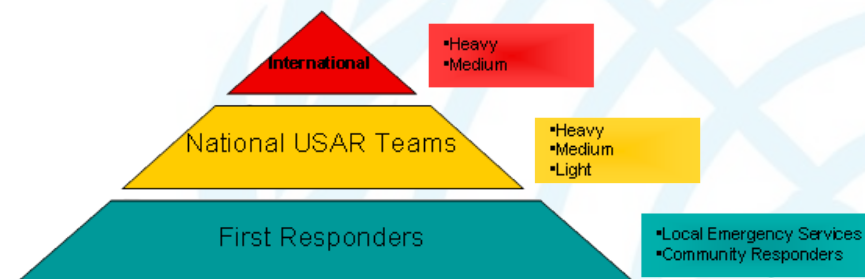
First rescues



The first survivors are being rescued by family members, passers-by and neighbours locating and carrying them or leading them into the streets. The injured and those shocked and dazed by what has happened lie or sit in the streets, some being treated by the first medical personnel to respond. Local emergency services begin to respond and start to coordinate the rescue efforts as best they can, lines of people moving debris from where cries for help can be heard under the rubble. Cell phones and video cameras record what is happening.

INSARAG IN SUPPORT OF FIRST RESPONDERS

The studies of documentary evidence from disasters show the importance of the rescue efforts in the immediate aftermath of an earthquake. Most people who are actually trapped by debris and eventually survive are rescued in the minutes and hours immediately following the event. Some of these are pulled from the wreckage of their houses and work places by friends, colleagues, family members and passers-by. Many are rescued during the first organized phase of rescue operations by the local emergency services, but largely in an uncoordinated way. This can be represented by a diagram referred to as the 'pyramid of response'.



The pyramid of response shows the mass of victims being rescued by the first responders. The first responders are then supported by national USAR teams (wherever these exist). However, these teams rescue fewer victims because in most cases they are overwhelmed by the enormity of the situation. The teams are in turn supplemented by international Heavy and Medium INSARAG teams who statistically rescue even fewer people, apart from those trapped deep within the rubble of collapsed buildings.

The importance of rescue capability within the local community was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly (GA) in resolution 57/150 of 2002. One of the key recommendations for INSARAG was to "strengthen co-operation among States at the regional and sub-regional levels in the field of disaster preparedness and response, with particular focus on (rescue) capacity building at all levels".

In meeting the challenges set out by the GA resolution, INSARAG has identified that a key requirement for building local rescue capacity would be the development and training of local emergency services, voluntary organizations or citizen groups. Therefore, INSARAG developed a USAR First Responders training package to meet the training needs of first responders. This package is available for all INSARAG community members as the initial building block when involved in capacity building projects.

"Everyone came to the realisation that something needed to be done. To be able to not only respond, but respond in a coordinated fashion."

Dewey Perks, Chairman of INSARAG Training Working Group (2007-2010)

Trainer and participants at the INSARAG First Responder Training in China, 2010.
© Dave Dickson



Some of the first responder at the earthquake in Bam, Iran earthquake, 2003.
© Unknown

Participants practicing at the INSARAG First Responder Training in Singapore, 2008.
© Dave Dickson



+1 hour

The news
spreads



Reports start to come from the affected area. They are made available through the global media, government and other unofficial sources. Initial information from the affected country, the INSARAG network, OCHA and international media outlets are posted on the Virtual OSOCC. Gradually, a picture is built up as to the extent and severity of the disaster and the likelihood that international assistance will be required. Often this initial information is patchy and unsubstantiated, but still requires calculated decisions and actions to be taken.

INSARAG COORDINATES ONLINE

The Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (VO) is the web-based coordination and information management tool available to the INSARAG community. Its purpose is to provide a Web-based platform for real-time information exchange for all the international players likely to be involved. These players include OCHA, the disaster-affected country, responding countries, the OSOCC and Reception and Departure Centre in the affected country, USAR teams, international humanitarian assistance organizations and other actors.

Through the collection and dissemination of critical information, the VO supports and assists the decision-making processes of responding governments and organizations.

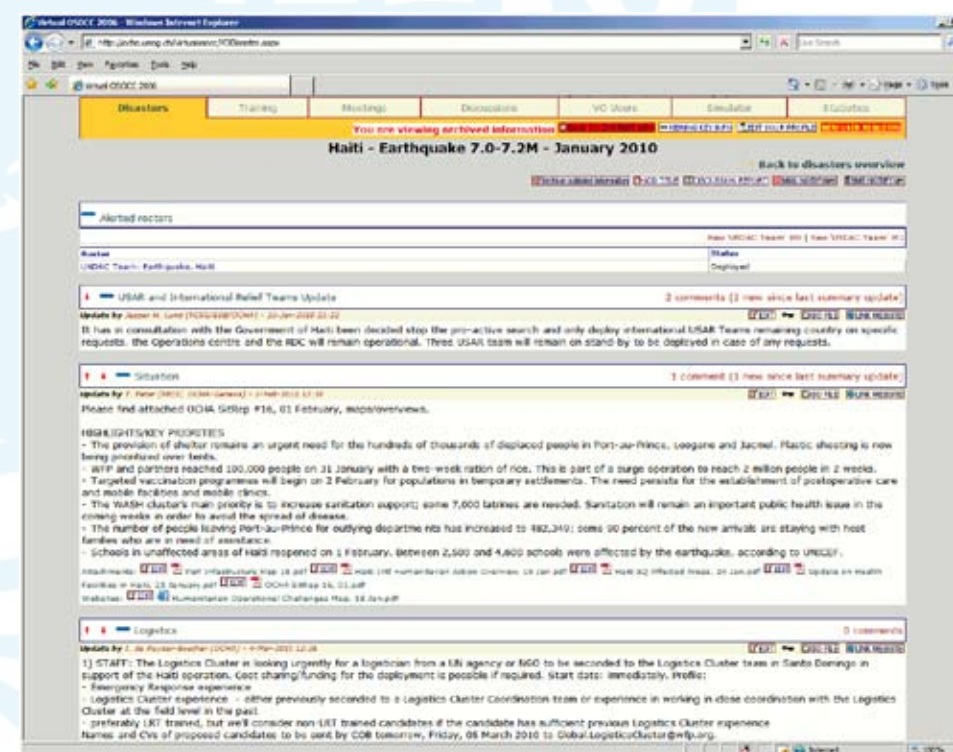
The VO also functions as an online coordination tool, allowing USAR teams deploying to a disaster to post up-to-the-minute information, including travel information and logistical requirements. Throughout the disaster response phases all national and international actors can and do share information through the VO.

The VO also has an important function outside of emergency response, acting as a virtual information hub for the non emergency related INSARAG activities such as training, meetings and other events. Its functionality allows the working groups to use the VO for online sharing of information and documents as they are updated and revised as part of the continual process of keeping INSARAG relevant and up to date. The VO also acts as a repository for meeting reports, technical information, guidance documents and other supporting literature.

“When a disaster occurs in another continent, factors such distance, conflicting time zones and the need for quick information are critical for Governments wishing to provide timely and appropriate support. The VO allows for a “snap shot” of the resources being mobilised and the potential gaps in services. For example, when the Haiti earthquake occurred in January 2010 VO provided the important information that there were already sufficient USAR teams being deployed. This allowed Australia to focus its resources on assisting Haiti in other areas of critical need and as a result, our response was considered timely and appropriate.”
Thanh Le, INSARAG Focal Point, Australia



IEC classified USAR Poland's liaison
updating information on the VO,
Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© UNDAC



Example of the Virtual OSOCC
from the Haiti Earthquake 2010.
© OCHA

+3 hours

*Survivors emerge
into the light*



The local emergency and medical services are leading the rescue efforts, coordinating the local population in saving lives. Casualties have been recovered from the streets and less damaged buildings. The first pictures are being released through the global media. The affected national Government is mobilising resources to the area. International search and rescue teams are declaring their readiness and capacity on the VO, while governments announce their intentions to deploy appropriate resources and aid.

A WELL-ESTABLISHED SYSTEM

In the first hours of an emergency, the entire INSARAG community starts communicating through various information-sharing tools. While these tools are used for information management, an important element of INSARAG for effective information exchange is its strong structure and its members' involvement.

The main structures for the involvement of INSARAG members are the regional groups, the INSARAG Steering Group and the INSARAG team leaders meetings. INSARAG regional antennas and ad-hoc working groups are also crucial entities of INSARAG.

Once a country or organisation joins INSARAG, it provides information regarding its capability and capacity, and contact details of its INSARAG focal points. This information is entered in the international USAR Directory, managed by the INSARAG Secretariat. The national INSARAG focal points are invited to the meetings of INSARAG regional groups, namely Africa-Europe-Middle East, Americas and Asia-Pacific. INSARAG regional groups meet annually to plan regional activities and to keep abreast of USAR-related issues. Recommendations from INSARAG regional meetings that have overall implications on international USAR issues require endorsement by the INSARAG Steering Group before implementation.

While the regional groups meet to discuss more policy-level issues, the USAR team leaders from around the world meet annually at the INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting to review and discuss USAR issues. These meetings provide a forum to discuss technical issues relating to training and best practice based on lessons learned from previous USAR operations.

The decisions and recommendations from INSARAG Regional Group and Team Leaders Meetings are taken to the INSARAG Steering Group, which comprises the INSARAG Chairman, the INSARAG Secretary, the INSARAG Regional Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons, the Chairpersons of INSARAG working groups and the national focal points of countries who have INSARAG classified USAR teams. The Steering Group's role is to determine the INSARAG policy.

“The INSARAG Regional Groups through the Team Leaders’ meetings and other mechanisms, have succeeded in galvanising the International USAR response in efficient, effective and humanitarian manner”

Joe Bishop, Founding Member of INSARAG



INSARAG Americas Regional Group Meeting in Mexico, 2009.
© INSARAG Americas

*INSARAG Steering Group Meeting
in Switzerland, 2010.*
© OCHA



*INSARAG Africa/Europe/Middle East
Regional Group Meeting
in Germany, 1997.*
© THW



*INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting
in UAE, 2010.*
© UAE

+6 hours

*How bad
is it really ?*



By now, regional and national governments have received initial assessments of the scale of damage and an estimated number of victims. Regional assistance from within the country is arriving to help the affected communities. Civilian rescue teams and the military forces are often the first responders from outside the local community to arrive in the area.

More details of the disaster are becoming available to the INSARAG community through the OCHA network. These details are posted onto the VO so that international teams can prepare to deploy. Among those declaring their readiness to deploy is the UNDAC team that is closely following up on the situation.

COORDINATION IS THE KEY

The UNDAC team is a standby team of disaster management professionals from member governments, OCHA and other United Nations organisations.

Upon request from a disaster-stricken country, the UNDAC team can be deployed within hours to carry out a rapid assessment of priority needs and to support national authorities and the United Nations Resident and/or Humanitarian Coordinator to coordinate international relief on site.

Members of the specially selected, trained and equipped UNDAC team are permanently on standby to deploy on missions immediately following disasters and emergencies anywhere in the world. An UNDAC team can be on scene within 24 hours of any disaster or emergency. Thanks to operational partnerships, teams are self-sufficient while in the field.

Particularly after an earthquake, the UNDAC team has to be mobilized rapidly in order to effectively support the national authorities of the affected country in coordinating the search and rescue operation of international USAR teams. The UNDAC team is also responsible for providing up-to-date information on the disaster situation to the international community through OCHA and the in-country United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.

Coordination is provided through setting up and staffing a coordination centre, known as "OSOCC" (On-Site Operations Coordination Centre). The UNDAC team brings a wealth of experience and tested processes for the collection and management of information, including assessing victims' priority needs.

"I never fail to be impressed by the way UNDAC team members arrive at the disaster site from all over the world and immediately, almost effortlessly, integrate into one effective team intent on facilitating the work of the incoming emergency response organizations. I guess you have to be part of it to really appreciate the dedication and professionalism of the team members who, with a few minutes' notice, are ready to turn their worlds upside down and to deploy to even the most complicated - and distressing - emergency situations."
Jesper Lund, Officer-In-Charge, FCSS, OCHA Geneva

UNDAC team member discussing operational issues with the USAR team member, Turkey earthquake, 1999.
© UNDAC



UNDAC team members travelling under difficult conditions, Afghanistan earthquake, 2002.
© UNDAC



UNDAC team at a joint planning meeting with local authorities, Turkey earthquake, 1999.
© UNDAC

+8 hours

*The world begins
to mobilise*



The affected Government completes its initial disaster assessment and requests the assistance of the international community, often through the United Nations. National assistance is starting to arrive to help local resources in the rescue operations. The first international teams are mobilising.

LEARNING TOGETHER

Each year, INSARAG organizes Earthquake Response Exercises and awareness training courses to further the objectives of United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/150 of 2002. The INSARAG Earthquake Response Exercise is designed to exercise all the different components involved in coordinating the first phase of the international response to an earthquake-affected country.

The exercises aim to increase the awareness of INSARAG methodology among national and local authorities in the host country, preferably disaster prone, and to practice coordination and cooperation between international and national responders in major disasters and to test the international response plans to such disasters.

Earthquake-prone countries typically host the exercise. The target audience are representatives from the various ministries and agencies that make up the countries' national disaster management systems, national responders (including fire services, rescue services and the military), international USAR teams, the UNDAC team, and other relevant United Nations agencies and humanitarian organisations.

The exercise scenario is based on an earthquake disaster that overwhelms local and national response capacity and requires the affected country to request international assistance. The practice of the INSARAG methodology at these exercises helps the potentially affected country to better implement the request for international assistance and the coordination of incoming international relief in the case of a real earthquake.

“China is very fortunate to organize the 2006 INSARAG Asia/Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise and send the teams to participate in other exercises held elsewhere. These exercises have proven very effective in gaining the hands-on experience of the real scenario and streamline our preparation process which is very crucial for rapid deployment for domestic and overseas mission. Our rapid response to 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, the Haiti earthquake and Yushu Earthquake has demonstrated our progress in this regard.”

Huang Jianfa, INSARAG Focal Point, China (INSARAG Asia Pacific Regional Group Vice-Chair 2010)

*The first arriving USAR teams together
with an UNDAC team member
at the RDC at an exercise,
Armenia, 2009.*
© UNDAC



*USAR teams assessing the collapsed buildings
in the situation rooms at an exercise
Mongolia, 2007.*
© UNDAC.

*USAR team leaders in Katmandu city
at an exercise,
Nepal, 2009.*
© UNDAC



+12 hours

The international assistance arrives



Initial rescues are nearing completion and the emergency responders focus on reports of people entombed in buildings. The first international search and rescue teams start arriving in the affected country.

GLOBAL APPROACH BASED ON COMMON STANDARDS

Since the creation of INSARAG in 1991, significant progress has been made in improving standards for USAR assistance and coordinating international response to major sudden-onset disasters. Probably the most critical component of this improvement has been the development of the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology.

The INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology is a document with instructions for implementing procedures and standards for international USAR in collapsed-structure emergencies. It derives its authority from United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/150 of 2002. This resolution endorses the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology to be used as the reference for international USAR and disaster response.

The INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology is a series of living documents, updated when existing methodology is improved or amended based on experience gained in disaster response operations or INSARAG events. Amendments and modifications to the document are subject to consensus in all INSARAG regional groups and endorsement by the INSARAG Steering Group. The latest version was published in March 2008. It is available in 12 languages (Arabic, Armenian, Bahasa Indonesia, Chinese, Croatian, English, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish).

The remarkable effectiveness of the guidelines as a tool for the international USAR community has been significant. This is thanks to all INSARAG members who have adopted and used them as a basis on which to plan, prepare and respond to disasters.

“The INSARAG Guidelines is a very useful tool to help us build our capacity and understand the speciality and recognise the challenges for the IEC. It is a result of a big effort of a lot of people which I stand up and respect for the great work.”

Mohamed Al Ansari, INSARAG Focal Point, UAE (INSARAG Africa/Europe/Middle East Regional Group Chair 2010)



IEC classified Dutch team USAR.NL at a briefing to respond to the earthquake in Haiti, 2010.
© USAR.NL



IEC classified Icelandic USAR team ICE-SAR as the first arriving team to Port-au-Prince, Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© Ice-Sar



IEC classified USA 1 USAR team deploying to the earthquake, Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© USA 1 USAR team



Russian USAR team responding to the earthquake, China earthquake, 2008.
© Emercom.

+18 hours

The World meets at the reception centre



At the point of arrival to the affected country a Reception Centre is established by the first arriving international search and rescue team or the UNDAC Team, providing a focal point for the incoming international teams and assisting in the organisation of transport and logistics for the international relief effort.

INSARAG teams continue to arrive in the affected country, passing through this Reception Centre.

COORDINATION STARTS ON ARRIVAL

INSARAG developed the Reception and Departure Centre (RDC) to assist with the coordination of humanitarian responders in the early stages and the end of an international deployment. The RDC facilitates and coordinates the arrival of the international resources at the beginning of the mission (Reception Centre) and their departure at the end of the mission (Departure Centre).

A sudden large influx of relief teams and relief items to the arrival ports in the disaster-affected country is an expected consequence of international response to a sudden-onset disaster. Therefore, the RDC is established in a suitable location close to the ports of arrival into the disaster-affected country, usually at an airport. The RDC's primary responsibilities are to register incoming teams; provide a briefing on the latest information; assist with customs and immigration; direct teams to the OSOCC; and pass processed information of incoming teams to the OSOCC in order to facilitate the operational planning in the OSOCC. Also, in coordination with the relevant airport and/or border authorities, the RDC can locate and provide logistical support including maps, vehicles, translators, lumber, fuel and compressed gases.

The UNDAC team established an RDC. If an international USAR team arrives before the UNDAC team, the first-arriving international USAR team is responsible for establishing a provisional RDC.

At the team's departure, the RDC registers the teams, obtains their reports and assists with departure procedures. Together with the OSOCC, the RDC is the backbone of the coordination that is developed on-scene by INSARAG and UNDAC.

„As you arrive with your team in a foreign country affected by an earthquake, the RDC is the first thing you look for so you can get information about how to proceed. Having representatives there from an IEC team ensures that the information you get is relevant, accurate and up-to-date.“

Gisli Olafsson, Team Leader of ICE-SAR

Ensuring information sharing inside the RDC at Port-au-Prince airport supported by the Liaison of the Government, Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© UNDAC



The UNDAC member registering the arrival of a USAR team at the RDC, Indonesia earthquake, 2009.
© UNDAC



USAR teams waiting at the airport, Iran earthquake, 2003.
© UNDAC



A little boy rescued by the Singapore Civil Defense Force (SCDF) in the 9.1 earthquake Taichung County 1999.
© SCDF

+24 hours

*From chaos to
coordination*



At the main scene of operations, the UNDAC team or the first-arriving INSARAG Team has set up the OSOCC. Initially just a single tent or portable structure, the OSOCC expands rapidly as other international teams arrive.

On arrival to the affected country, international teams look for the United Nations flag to find the Reception Centre. Once they pass through the Reception Centre, they are given the directions to the OSOCC, where they will find more information on the situation and tasking instructions. Teams provide liaison personnel to the OSOCC. The OSOCC is supported with equipment and specialist technicians provided by one of the Humanitarian Partnerships (APHP-Asia Pacific Humanitarian Partnership, AST-Americas Support Team or IHP-International Humanitarian Partnership). The OSOCC develops into the hub for the coordination of USAR operations.

COORDINATING RESCUE OPERATIONS

The OSOCC provides a platform for international relief actors to exchange information and coordinate their activities. It is established by the UNDAC team or the first-arriving international USAR Team (if arrived before the UNDAC team).

The OSOCC is staffed by personnel from the UNDAC team and supported by liaison personnel from international USAR teams. It assists the national authorities of the affected country with the management of the disaster to effectively integrate and involve the international resources in the national response to the disaster.

In the early stages of a deployment, OSOCC assesses the need for international resources and provide advice and support to national emergency managers in the affected country, assisting them with the management of operations.

As the deployment develops and more international relief teams arrive, OSOCC coordinates the operations of international teams and provides them with operational information about the situation. This includes details of the operations of the national authorities, and the current logistical and transport arrangements. Once an operational plan has been developed in liaison with the national responders, the international teams receive their assignments and they also report back and debrief through the OSOCC.

At all times, OSOCC staff are in close cooperation with the national authorities. The staff act as the primary liaison between the national authorities and the international USAR teams, ensuring close coordination and information exchange during the rescue phase.

Depending on the magnitude and size of the disaster-affected areas, one or more similarly staffed sub-OSOCCs may be established in order to ensure coordination over a wider geographical area. The flexible nature of the OSOCC structure, adjusting to the magnitude and complexity of the disaster, is the key in bringing the right degree of coordination to the rescue operations.

“Stimulated by a disaster, came inspired creativeness; such is the case of INSARAG from which UNDAC and OSSOC were established and developed, turning chaos into coordination and haphazardness into the timely and systematic approach to the search and rescue, of the affected population”.

Ted Pearn, UNDAC Team Leader



UNDAC team members discussing operational issues with international and local USAR team representatives, Algeria earthquake, 2003.
© UNDAC



The first coordination meeting for USAR operations attended by the liaison of the Government, Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© UNDAC



IHP members regularly practicing one of the largest humanitarian simulation exercises in the world.
© IHP



UNDAC Team Leader talking with the Head of Parliament, Iran earthquake, 2003.
© UNDAC

+48 hours

„Anyone there?“
Rescue team above



The majority of the international USAR teams have arrived in the affected country and are deployed. The OS-OCC has links with the national emergency management authority and information is being passed through the OSOCC to the international teams. The international teams, using sophisticated search device and trained dogs, start to locate further survivors buried deep in the rubble.

SETTING MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The deployment of international USAR teams has been of great benefit to trapped victims and the affected country. However lessons learned from previous earthquake responses have revealed the need for responding USAR teams to be of a certain capability, as well as being integrated within a well-coordinated system to ensure the most appropriate use of available USAR resources. As a consequence of these requirements, INSARAG determined that there is a need to classify international USAR teams according to their operational capabilities in order to ensure that only professionally qualified and appropriate USAR resources are deployed to an emergency. For this purpose, the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) concept was established in 2005.

The IEC process has grown into a driving force for raising the standards for USAR around the globe. The IEC enables disaster-affected countries to prioritise acceptance of international response support from USAR teams who can add proven value to their national capacity. In this respect, INSARAG is the leader in the humanitarian community, in that, it created internationally agreed operational standards, which are then verified by an independent international team. International USAR teams may select to classify as having either with a 'Medium' or a 'Heavy' rescue capability. From the establishment of IEC system in 2005 to the INSARAG Global Meeting in 2010; 19 teams have successfully met the criteria as an INSARAG Heavy or Medium team (14 Heavy teams and 5 Medium teams). Another 20 teams are in the IEC queue till 2013. One team has been reclassified. Classified teams are immediately identifiable by the IEC patch they wear on their uniform. In 2009, the earthquake response in Padang, Indonesia, became the first major international earthquake response with IEC classified teams attending.

The list of IEC classified teams (since 2005 until September 2010):

Hungary USAR Team, Hungary (2005)
UK-ISAR Team, UK (2006) (reclassification in 2009)
Fairfax County-USAID, USA (2006)
Los Angeles County –USAID, USA (2007)
USAR. NL, the Netherlands (2007)
THW USAR Team, Germany (2007)
ISAR Germany, Germany (2007)
Queensland USAR Team, Australia (2008)
SCDF, Singapore (2008)
SWIFT USAR, Sweden (2008)
NOR-SAR, Norway (2008)
Swiss Rescue, Switzerland (2008)
USAR Poland, Poland (2009)
ICE-SAR, Iceland (2009)
CISAR, China (2009)
UAE USAR Team, UAE (2009)
JDR USAR Team, Japan (2010)
DEMA, Denmark (2010)
B-FAST, Belgium (2010)



“IEC process has accelerated information sharing and mutual understanding among INSARAG members and humanitarian communities. Japan's USAR team has consolidated its USAR skills and enhanced its relations with other USAR teams and INSARAG members. Since IEC classified teams are expected to lead a effective coordination in disaster area, such benefit from IEC process is highly remarkable for Japan's USAR team.”

Setsuko Kawahara, INSARAG Focal Point, Japan (INSARAG Asia Pacific Regional Group Chair 2010)



IEC classifiers observing the work of Polish USAR team during their IEC exercise, 2009.
© USAR Poland



IEC classified Australian team of Queensland, Indonesia earthquake, 2009.
© Queensland USAR Team



IEC classified Japanese USAR Team, JDRT, 2010.
© JDRT



IEC classified UAE USAR team at the IEC exercise ceremony, 2009.
© UAE USAR Team

+5 days

Rescue efforts
continue



The rescue phase of the international relief effort is ongoing under the coordination of the OSOCC. More survivors are located and rescued by the international search and rescue teams using equipment capable of cutting through and lifting the debris of even the largest buildings. USAR team leaders come together every day at the OSOCC to meet and get a briefing on the current situation of the operations.

At the same time, some USAR teams start to focus beyond the search and rescue phase as the other humanitarian assistance needs start to increase while the search and rescue needs start to decrease.

FROM RESCUE TO RELIEF - “BEYOND THE RUBBLE”

People trapped within the voids and spaces of a collapsed building often survive for many hours, even days, in the post-collapse period. This “rescue window” gives an opportunity for search and rescue teams with proper capability and resources to rescue the victims trapped under such conditions. INSARAG classified Medium and Heavy teams have such capabilities and equipment.

Medium USAR teams have the operational capability for technical search and rescue operations in structural-collapse incidents. Heavy USAR teams have operational capability for difficult and complex technical operations, particularly those involving structures reinforced with structural steel. Medium USAR teams are capable of breaking, breaching and cutting concrete, typically found in urban areas. Heavy USAR teams are expected to have an ability to cut, break and breach concrete reinforced with structural steel.

Even as the rescue phase continues with the efforts of mostly Medium and Heavy teams, the thoughts of many USAR Team Leaders and those managing the OSOCC turn to demobilisation and the teams’ return to their home countries, as the rescue window starts to close.

This transition between the rescue phase and the recovery phase of any disaster is not immediate and obvious. Indeed, it is now considered that both the rescue and recovery phases run in parallel. As an increasing trend, many USAR teams deploy with added capacities to strengthen ongoing humanitarian assistance and/or further support the humanitarian actors once the USAR phase is over. This is an added value of USAR teams to engage with the other humanitarian relief operations. This humanitarian work of USAR teams beyond the rubble is often supplemented by donations of food, shelters and equipment prior to the teams’ departure, or extended medical assistance to the victims.

“It is important to understand that the rescue effort, saving lives, is not only that. It is the beginning of a continuous work to support a disaster stricken country with relief efforts as well as reconstruction works. The link between rescue and reconstruction must be visible for everybody.”

Kjell Larsson, INSARAG Focal Point, Sweden (INSARAG Africa/Europe/Middle East Regional Group Vice-Chair 2010)

The IEC classified Dutch USAR team distributing relief goods after the end of its USAR operations, Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© USAR.NL



Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes with the Government representative and UNDAC Team Leader, Indonesia earthquake, 2009.
© UNDAC

The IEC classified Swiss USAR team distributing non-food items, Indonesia earthquake, 2009.
© Swiss USAR Team



+7 days

Rescue gives way
to recovery



National and international USAR teams come to the end of the proactive rescue phase. The emphasis has moved to the recovery phase led by the humanitarian cluster lead agencies, supported by the national and NGO community. The rescue operations continue in response to the requests from reliable resources. International rescue teams finalise the demobilisation process and file their after-action reports.

FROM OPERATIONS TO LESSONS LEARNED

In consultation with the USAR team leaders at the coordination meetings, the UNDAC team makes a recommendation to the Government of the affected country to call for the end of the proactive USAR phase. When the Government declares the end of this proactive USAR phase, USAR teams end their operations and either return to their homes or switch their roles into other humanitarian types of assistance. USAR operations continue only in response to requests from reliable resources.

Social media is very important, as seen following the Haiti earthquake in 2010. The public provides information through these media tools. Such information is carefully analysed at the OS-OCC and double-checked with other resources, if available. At this stage, it is extremely important to explain to the public the reasons why the proactive phase of operations has ended.

All these experiences from different phases of USAR operations are then used at different platforms of INSARAG such as meetings, to learn lessons and develop better preparedness for the next disaster.

“In reviewing the success of the search and rescue teams that responded in Haiti after the earthquake, it has become clear that we need to work harder to ensure that smaller teams are prepared to work alongside INSARAG-classified teams. Using these experiences to build capacities and promote the INSARAG standards is more critical than ever. The world continues to be vulnerable, as we saw in 2010 with the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile.”

Tim Callaghan (INSARAG Americas Regional Group Chair)



The acting Special Representative for the Secretary General Edmond Mullet addressing the USAR teams, Haiti earthquake, 2010.
© UNDAC



The coordination meeting for the USAR team leaders, Algeria earthquake, 2003.
© UNDAC



USAR team leaders coordination meeting at an exercise, Mongolia, 2007.
© UNDAC.



The Government representative and UNDAC Team Leader at the coordination meeting, Indonesia earthquake, 2009.
© UNDAC

+ weeks/months

*Learning from
experience*



The INSARAG community reviews the lessons learned from the earthquake through a formal and informal review process. System improvements are discussed and new policy, tactics and training are developed to address the lessons learned.

LEARNING FROM SHARED EXPERIENCE

Every disaster is a learning opportunity. Therefore at the end of a major international operation, the INSARAG network meets to discuss the lessons identified and how to implement these lessons to develop the INSARAG methodology accordingly. This process involves all INSARAG members.

When required to assist in further developing international disaster response and identifying lessons, the INSARAG Steering Group can establish ad-hoc working groups to develop solutions or proposals to identified challenges. These are then fed back to the INSARAG community.

The INSARAG Secretariat facilitates the composition and functioning of these working groups and promotes participation of all regions. All INSARAG members are encouraged to participate in INSARAG working groups. These groups are established to work within pre-defined terms of reference and are dissolved when the outcomes are delivered. The INSARAG working groups' deliverables are shared at respective meetings of the INSARAG team leaders and regional groups. These deliverables are enhanced with feedback from these meetings and are then presented at the INSARAG Steering Group for endorsement.

Those deliverables endorsed by the INSARAG Steering Group are added to the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology. This is what makes the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology a valuable asset for minimum international standards and a great capacity building tool.

“INSARAG Guidelines endorsed by the UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 2002 is the key behind the success of INSARAG’s well-functioning methodology. It does not only contribute to the work of INSARAG, but also provides a good guidance for the coordination tools used to facilitate the broader humanitarian assistance.”

Rudolf Muller, Chief of Emergency Services Branch, OCHA Geneva



INSARAG USAR Team Leaders Meeting on lessons learned and follow up to the 1999 Turkey and Taipei earthquakes, Germany, 1999.
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INSARAG Haiti After Action Review Meeting, Switzerland, 2010.
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USAR Teams representatives discussing capacity building at an inter-regional working group meeting. Switzerland, 2010.
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INSARAG Medical Working Group Meeting, UAE, 2010.
© UAE USAR Team

HYOGO DECLARATION



INSARAG Hyogo Declaration from the First Global Meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), Kobe, Japan 14 -16 Sept 2010

“Recognition and Strengthening of International Urban Search and Rescue Operational Standards”

The INSARAG, at the occasion of the Global Meeting held in Kobe, Japan with 188 participants from 70 countries and 7 organisations

Expressing its reaffirmed commitment to UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 16 December 2002 on ‘Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International Urban Search and Rescue Assistance’ as the guiding document for international urban search and rescue assistance together with commitment to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters as the main international policy guidance for risk reduction, including preparedness activities in this field

Noting with appreciation the support expressed in the numerous resolutions for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in its capacity as the INSARAG Secretariat, by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly in their endorsement of, and encouragement to, INSARAG and its activities

Taking this opportunity to express its solidarity with the people of Hyogo Prefecture who are commemorating the 15th Anniversary of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake of 1995

Expressing its appreciation to the Government of Japan for hosting this first ever INSARAG Global Meeting in Kobe in 2010 and to the Government of Switzerland for the valuable support provided, therefore, the Member States present hereby resolve the following:

1. *Expresses its satisfaction with the continuing progress made by INSARAG in the past two decades in creating a well established, professional Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) network that works to ensure rapid response and coordination to sudden onset disasters i.e. earthquakes, in support of the affected population and governments,*
2. *Recognizes the increasing and expanded role played by international urban search and rescue teams in the response to major earthquakes, as demonstrated recently in Haiti (2010), not only focused on search and rescue, but also on a more comprehensive level of humanitarian assistance towards recovery, and emphasises the continued determination of INSARAG to maintain working towards improving the professionalism and capacity of international urban search and rescue teams to respond to earthquakes and collapsed structure emergencies, and also through the strengthening of national capacities in order to deal with such emergencies utilising their own resources,*
3. *Accordingly expresses its appreciation and support for the establishment of independently verifiable, operational standards for international urban search and rescue teams through the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) process, and urges and encourages all Member States with urban search and rescue teams to*

HYOGO DECLARATION

be deployed internationally to ensure their teams take into account the IEC process,

4. *Reaffirms its full support for disaster-affected countries in executing their primary role to initiate, coordinate and organise the international humanitarian assistance on their territories,*
5. *Therefore urges and highly recommends that building national, local and community capacity is critical for effective response to earthquakes, collapsed structure and other related emergencies in a rapidly urbanizing world, and welcomes the work undertaken by the INSARAG network to develop recommendations for operational and organisational guidelines for capacity building of national USAR teams, and encourage Member States to support such efforts,*
6. *Also concerned that an additional burden may be placed on the resources of affected countries by those international urban search and rescue teams which are inadequately prepared, trained and equipped. Therefore encourages, all countries to enhance and promote capacity building at national level and invites countries affected by disasters to consider the specific assistance of INSARAG IEC teams to respond by offering priority access to such teams that will make a genuine and meaningful difference in the life-saving search and rescue phase of an earthquake or other disasters involving collapsed structures,*
7. *Calls upon all urban search and rescue teams responding internationally to earthquakes to follow the field coordination procedures of OCHA, especially those laid down in the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology and coordinate their work with the directions of the Reception and Departure Centre (RDC) and the On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) established in the disaster area by United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Teams,*
8. *Expresses the determination of all members of INSARAG to strengthen collaboration with OCHA, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and all other international and regional entities involved in preparedness and response, through the facilitation of the INSARAG Secretariat to greatly improve the preparedness for, and response to, earthquakes and other disasters with collapsed structures and to build up capacities consistent with the international humanitarian architecture,*
9. *Expresses the commitment to renew its efforts to strengthen and consolidate further cooperation between the three Regional Groups of INSARAG (Americas; Asia-Pacific as well as Africa, Europe and Middle East) , especially in the areas of preparedness, capacity building, operations and training as well as cooperation amongst Member States within each region - in coordination with other relevant regional organisations,*
10. *Calls upon the Member States of the United Nations to continue fully supporting implementation of the provisions of UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 16 Dec 2002 on ‘Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International Urban Search and Rescue assistance’ and to continue to support the activities of INSARAG, and*
11. *In conclusion, expresses its satisfaction with the outcome of the First INSARAG Global Meeting and affirms its intent to hold the next INSARAG Global Meeting - in 2015.*

HYOGO DECLARATION SIGNING IN KOBE



The 'INSARAG Hyogo Declaration' which was a result of the INSARAG Global Meeting 2010 was unanimously endorsed by all participating countries. This signed version was then handed over to the Governor of Hyogo, Mr. Toshizo Ido to be displayed at the Great Hanshin-Awaji Memorial Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution in Kobe, Japan. © OCHA



The 'INSARAG Hyogo Declaration' was signed by the INSARAG Chairman Ambassador Toni Frisch, all three INSARAG Regional Group Chairs Mr. Mohamed Al- Ansari, Mr. Tim Callaghan, Ms. Setsuko Kawahara, Director of OCHA Geneva Mr. Rashid M. Khalikov and the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture Mr. Toshizo Ido at the close of the ceremony.-forging a new era for INSARAG. © OCHA

INSARAG GLOBAL MEETING 2010 - GROUP PICTURE



More than 200 participants from approximately 70 countries and 6 organizations participated to the first-ever INSARAG Global Meeting that was held in Kobe, Japan on 14-16 September 2010. © OCHA

CONCLUDING REMARKS - NEXT STEPS



This publication demonstrates the story of INSARAG 20 years on. This story takes us from the late 1980s when the international USAR community realised the need of a coordinated approach in the wake of the 1988 Armenia earthquake, to 2010 when the international USAR community had its biggest international USAR response in Haiti. These two decades of INSARAG are full of many achievements. INSARAG managed to develop many tools and these tools have been successfully used at the response to collapsed structure emergencies. We learned many lessons since the establishment of INSARAG and we managed to adapt ourselves to these new challenges by developing new tools and improving our methodology. Now it is time to look ahead and forecast the story of INSARAG's future.

We learned from our previous experiences that the USAR concept has evolved through the years. As demonstrated in the recent emergencies such as Indonesia of 2009 and Haiti of 2010, the USAR teams deploy with expanded assets. They not only perform pure search and rescue work, they also provide other types of humanitarian assistance at the transition from the live saving phase to the relief phase of an emergency. This makes the added value of USAR teams even more important. The next step is to integrate more with the broader humanitarian community and adapt our methodology accordingly.

Since the establishment of INSARAG, we have also observed a greater participation from different regions of the world. In early 1990s, we were only a few countries, today we are a network that covers the entire world in three regions with both disaster prone countries and assisting countries. The next step is to expand this network even further to all the professional USAR teams around the world.

INSARAG has developed globally accepted independently verifiable, operational standards for international USAR teams through the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) process. These IEC classified teams demonstrated their real value-add at the two major earthquake responses (Indonesia 2009 and Haiti 2010) after the establishment of the IEC system. The next step is to encourage all member states with USAR teams that deploy internationally to ensure their teams undergo the IEC process and to encourage disaster affected countries to give priority access to IEC classified teams at their international assistance request.

INSARAG has also achieved great success at capacity building. As we experienced at the earthquakes in the decade of the 2000s, building national, local and community capacity is critical for effective response to earthquakes and collapsed structure emergencies in a rapidly urbanizing world. Therefore, capacity building has always been a top priority for INSARAG. The next step is to develop operational and organisational standards for capacity building of national USAR teams and to ensure that we all work together through a coordinated approach to build up capacities at all levels.

Today, the INSARAG network is not only USAR teams; we are an expanded network of responders with our partners. They complement our work; they make our work more efficient. This great cooperation with our partners makes INSARAG even stronger. The next step is building on these partnerships and even cooperating with new partners, regional and international entities in those areas where there is need.

We have written the 20 years of story of INSARAG all together and I feel confident in the commitment of all members to write the next 20 years of INSARAG.

Ambassador Toni Frisch
INSARAG Global Chairman

FACES OF INSARAG - USAR OPERATIONS



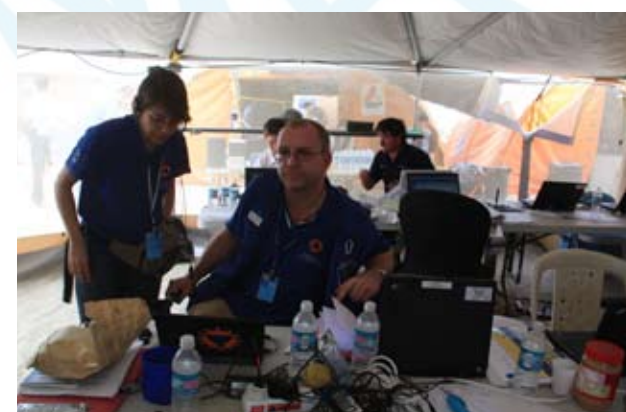
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FACES OF INSARAG - IEC

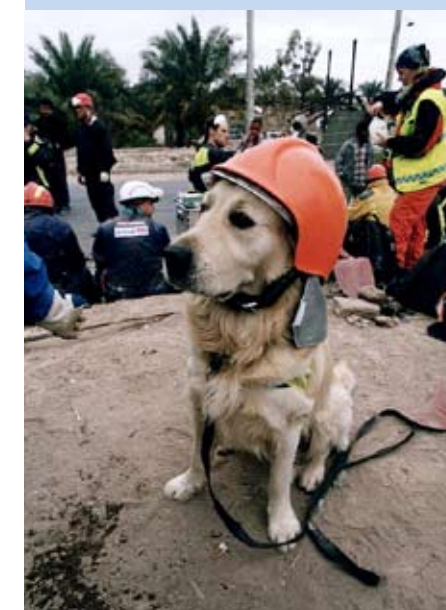


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FACES OF INSARAG - PARTNERS



FACES OF INSARAG - SEARCH DOGS



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This commemoration of INSARAG's 20th year anniversary would not be possible without the enthusiasm of all the visionary people who initially had the idea to establish INSARAG network and all the colleagues who contributed to the work of INSARAG since its establishment. We wish to extend special thanks to the INSARAG Regional Group Chairs and Vice-Chairs, who took this role since the establishment of INSARAG.

And lastly our special thanks to all the individuals of INSARAG family that make INSARAG a big and strong family.

The INSARAG Secretariat
Field Coordination Support Section
Emergency Services Branch
OCHA, Geneva

INSARAG

The Story of INSARAG 20 Years On...