

Chairman's Summary INSARAG Steering Group Meeting 2019, Geneva Switzerland

Introduction

The INSARAG Chairs 2019's meeting was held on Wednesday 6th February 2019, chaired by the INSARAG Global Chair, Ambassador Manuel Bessler. Participants include the Chief of the Emergency Response Support Branch in OCHA Geneva, Mr. Rudolf Müller, Regional and Troika chair members, Working Group Chairs and the INSARAG Secretariat. The meeting ensured a more focussed and effective approach to consultations and empowered the Regional Chairs to take a greater ownership and convey the feedback from their regions to the decisions and endorsements made at the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) level.

The recommendations from the meeting of INSARAG Chairs were then brought forward to the ISG Open meeting, held the following day – Thursday 7th February. The meeting was opened by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller. The meeting was attended by the Global Chair, Regional Chairs and Working Group Chairs who presented the collective and agreed recommendations to the wider participants of the ISG – including member countries with INSARAG classified teams, partners and the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week's network participants. The Agendas of the both ISG meetings 2019 are in **Annex A.**

The ISG meeting on 7th February was attended by **169 participants from 65 Member States and Organizations**. The meeting was facilitated by the INSARAG Secretariat. The lists of participants are in **Annex B.**

The PowerPoint presentations, documents and products for the respective sessions are available at: <https://bit.ly/2DK9w4p>

INSARAG Steering Group Meeting

Session 1 – Opening Statements, Adoption of Agenda and Global Updates 2019

On the 7 of February 2019, the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) meeting was officiated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller, the INSARAG Global Chair, Ambassador Manuel Bessler, and supported by the Chief of the Response Partnerships Section and Secretary of INSARAG within the Emergency Response Support Branch of OCHA, Mr. Jesper Holmer Lund and the Global Lead of INSARAG, Mr. Winston Chang,

Ms. Mueller reiterated the importance of the UN GA resolution 57/150 of 16 December 2002 on “Strengthening the coordination and effectiveness of international search and rescue assistance” and the relevance of the quality assurance system that assures quality response to affected countries. She further reinforced OCHA’s strong commitment and support to the INSARAG network moving forward.

Ambassador Bessler and the Secretariat summarised the INSARAG achievements of 2018, with focus on the strengthening of national and regional capacity. (Please find the INSARAG Annual Snapshot 2018 in **Annex C**) The Chairman reflected on the INSARAG work that will continue into 2019 focusing on high quality preparedness, flexible response, inclusiveness and quality assurance to fulfil INSARAG’s mandate, and appealed to the audience not to lose sight of INSARAG’s core mandate of effective preparedness and response to saving lives.

Session 2 – INSARAG Regional Work-Plan Report 2018 and 2019

- i) Ms. Megan Northrope and Mr. Paul Baxter (Asia-Pacific Regional Chairs) presented the Asia-Pacific Region achievements in 2018: The Earthquake Response Exercise in the Philippines, the INSARAG Regional Meeting in Japan, the active engagement in IEC/Rs processes and strengthening of national capacity, as shown with the high interest in the First Responders Training Course and the National Accreditation Process.
- ii) Ambassador Alejandro Daneri (Americas Regional Chair) thanked Ms Gintare Eidimtaite, the previous regional focal point for the Americas in the INSARAG Secretariat and welcomed Mr José Maria García in his new role as the regional focal point. Ambassador Daneri presented the key highlights including strengthening their participation and coordination to INSARAG events; strengthening and continuous implementation of the INSARAG External Support and Recognition Process on national USAR accreditation processes (IERSP) mechanism; implementation of USAR Coordination courses at country level and prioritization of regional SIMEX.
- iii) Mr. Luigi D’Angelo (Africa-Europe-Middle East Regional Chair) presented the achievements of the region in 2018. Italy announced their intent to engage in INSARAG National Accreditation Process and various initiatives that will strengthen the regional group through regular engagements and training events planned for 2019 (e.g. involvement of the EU Commission for an EU funded exercise).

Ambassador Bessler stated on record the strong leadership and commitment of the Chairs and the ownership of the regional network members. The workplans of the regional groups are available at: <http://www.insarag.org/regional-groups/regional-groups>

Session 3 – Working Groups Updates

The INSARAG Working Group Chairs from Training, Medical, International Light Teams, Information Management and Guidelines Review, summarised their work and plans ahead.

- i) Training Working Group (TWG) – The representative of the United States and Chair of the TWG, Mr. Dewey Perks, updated the about activities of the group. He reiterated the importance of collaborating with the Information Management WG to harmonise the work of strengthening USAR Coordination processes. Key also is strengthening the INSARAG Earthquake Response Exercise, a separate IEC and IER checklist, and developing the IEC /R TL and Mentors training to be hosted in Oman. The TWG also recommended that INSARAG consider making the IMWG a permanent working group because of the long-term need to strengthen coordination through improved information management.

The TWG would like to extend its deepest gratitude to former members Ms. Olga Proshina (OCHA) and Mr. Sean Moore (UK). They have both recently left the TWG, and it is important to recognize the dedicated service they provided over many years to the INSARAG network.

The TWG is happy to announce that Kira Chebakova (Russian Federation) and Paul Lawless (UK) have joined the group. The TWG looks forward to using their insight and experience to meet the ISG's expectations and assignments.

- ii) Medical Working Group (MWG) – The Chair of the group from the United States, Dr. Anthony Macintyre, updated about their activities and stressed on the important ongoing collaboration with the WHO EMT network, reiterating that the major driving force for 2019 is to support the Guidelines Review Group in the guidelines review. Team Leaders are strongly encouraged to review the document “Defining USAR Medicine” guidance Note, now available in the INSARAG website. Dr. Macintyre proposed online format for SIMEX USAR/EMT “dummy patient profile” development, which is also in the website.
- iii) Light Teams Working Group (LTWG) – The Chair of the LTWG from the Netherlands, Mr. Arjan Stam, updated on the milestones of the Light Team process. He introduced the checklist for IEC of Light Teams after extensive consultations and the final recommendations and its endorsement in the meeting held the previous day. The IEC process for interested light teams will be in accordance to the same procedures if teams would apply for Medium or Heavy classification, in accordance to the Guidelines. Suitable Light Teams may apply for IEC with the endorsement from their respective national INSARAG Focal Points.
- iv) Information Management WG (IMWG) – The Chair of the group from THW Germany, Mr. Peter Wolff, provided an update on the work of the IMWG and the various trainings and exercise where the IM system has been practised and tested. Teams are better prepared and willing to

adopt new technologies. He stated that, as technology advances rapidly, the new “USAR Information Management Dashboard” will be introduced in 2019, to the USAR Teams and this will strengthen the work of information management in the UCC. There will be a period of training and adaptation by teams and when this is done, it will be institutionalized in the guidelines. Interested donors willing to fund the licenses for the software for INSARAG can contact Peter Wolff at peter.wolff@evonik.com for detailed information.

- v) Guidelines Review Group (GRG) -The Co-Chairs of the GRG, Mr. David Sochor from Switzerland and Mr. Anwar Abdullah from Singapore, introduced the activities of the GRG. The Group informed that they have been working closely with all the Working Groups to incorporate revision and changes into the new Guidelines. The revised Guidelines will maintain a document which contains: (i) a summary on the changes made for each volume for the transitional Guidelines Review Group and (ii) a feedback segment. Key changes incorporated include the separation of the following items: (Checklists (e.g. NAP verification checklist, IEC/R checklist), Forms, Vol III (Operational Field Guide), Manuals (e.g. UCC) from the Guidelines and be placed under “Guidance Notes” section of INSARAG.org. The abovementioned items are an integral part of the Guidelines and the move would facilitate a more flexible and quicker content review and revision process. As for the Technical Reference Resource Library, feedback gathered from the regions and the Team Leader meeting agreed on the need to create such platform. As such, the Group recommended for it to leverage on INSARAG.Org to facilitate the introduction of the Technical Reference Library as follows:

- a. INSARAG endorsed documents like the UCC manual would be placed under the “Guidance Notes” section of <https://www.insarag.org/>
- b. A new section termed as “Technical Reference Library” under INSARAG.org would be created to act the knowledge repository for Best Practices. The section would comprise of the five USAR components.

The Group informed that these developments would be shared during the respective 2019 regional and Team Leader Meeting for feedback.

The technical work of the Working Groups is an integral part of the INSARAG USAR community and look forward to the work and developments in 2019 to Strengthen the work of INSARAG - Saving Lives.

Session 4 – Strengthening Partnerships

INSARAG expands its collaboration to relevant partners to strengthen mutual cooperation and collaboration in rescue operations during large scale emergencies.

- i) Head of the International Criminal Police Organisation, Disaster Victim Identification Unit (INTERPOL DVI), Mr. Mark Muelder, described the work of INTERPOL DVI and presented on mutually beneficial areas of collaboration with INSARAG. Relevant information on DVI operations could be considered for the INSARAG guidelines.

- ii) The Chief of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit, Cultural Sector, Mr. Giovanni Boccardi, described the work and importance of preserving cultural heritage when disasters affect areas with cultural heritage. The Secretary-General of ICOMOS-ICORP UNESCO, Ms. Zeynep Gul, further elaborated on the partnerships and the importance of collaboration to preserve valuable historical cultural structures. Relevant information on response to cultural heritage operations could be considered for the INSARAG guidelines and UNESCO offered training in this regard. Italy informed the meeting that the Italian USAR Team has trained personnel to respond to such disasters.

- iii) Mr. Martín Cucalón de Ycaza, the President of the Organisation of American Firefighters (OAF) and Ms. Goldy Rivas from OAF, presented on their mandate and role in the Americas region with membership of over 1 million firefighters.

Ambassador Manuel Bessler thanked the partners for their commitments and interest to collaborate and work closely with the INSARAG Network. The session was concluded with the signing ceremony of Letter of Intent (LoI) between Mr. Jesper Lund, the INSARAG Secretary, Mr. Martín Cucalón de Ycaza, President of the OAF and Mr. Raul Bustos Zavala, INSARAG Focal Point of the OAF. The LoI is in **Annex D**. The LoIs between INSARAG with INTERPOL and UNESCO will be announced in the course.

Session 5 – INSARAG Strategic Objectives 2020-2025

The third INSARAG Global Meeting will be hosted in 2020 - in Poland. The host will open its doors for a once every 5-yearly weeklong event, where the global network of policy and technical experts would come together and discuss and deliberate on new ways of delivering value added life-saving assistance transforming INSARAG to be fit for the future. An updated version of the INSARAG Guidelines will be released during the week reflecting essential lessons learned. The INSARAG community must now agree on a way to ensure continued relevance of the INSARAG model and define clear objectives of the community for 2020-2025 to guarantee continued success. The proposed theme for the third Global Meeting is “Prepare and Partner for Effective Response”. The

Regional Chairs accepted to lead in a theme and continue in-depth discussions on the three strategic objectives of the INSARAG Strategy for 2020-2025. The respective objectives are:

- a) ***Reinforcing Quality Standards – led by the Americas Region***
- b) ***Advancing Flexible Assistance – led by the Africa-Europe-Middle East Region***
- c) ***Enhancing Preparedness Efforts and Bolstering Partnerships – led by the Asia-Pacific Region***

Following, the regional chairs opened initial discussions on their areas of focus and have taken ownership of the respective themes. Collectively the INSARAG network takes ownership on the way ahead and is strongly encouraged to engage in consultations and cross regional discussions in the 2019 regional and team leaders' meetings. The outputs will converge and feed into the development of the "Warsaw Declaration" – this will be translated into the INSARAG Strategy for 2020-2025 to move the network -fit for purpose, for the future.

The first successful Recce mission to Warsaw took place from 14 to 16 January 2019 and the meeting was agreed to take place from 4 to 9 October 2020. The Chief Commandant of the State Fire Service of Poland has ensured the INSARAG Network of his highest commitment to INSARAG and has established a strong organizing team. For more information regarding the framework and structure of the meeting, please see **Annex E**.

The ISG further recommended that Regional Troikas take the lead regarding funding and participation of National Disaster Management Organisations representatives from disaster-prone countries in their regions.

Session 6 – In Plenary, Decisions on INSARAG Issues 2018 and 2019

For 2018:

The following were discussed earlier in the 2018 regional and team leader's meetings and brought In the Summary matrix on the decisions from these discussions. The decisions by the ISG on the 2018 issues are listed in **Annex F**.

For 2019:

Ambassador Bessler started by stressing the importance on the Policy and Operational issues that have been proposed for 2019 Regional Meeting discussions. The ISG welcomed these important and relevant issues for discussions in 2019 and look forward to the reporting back in ISG 2020. The proposed issues for discussion in 2019 are listed in **Annex G**.

Session 7 – Beyond Operations in Collapsed Structures – Dual-use Concept” – Can INSARAG Teams do more than USAR?

The panellists – Mr. David Sochor from the DACHL Group, Mr. Flemming Nielson, Chairman of the International Humanitarian Partnership, Mr. Pierre de Villeneuve, HUSAR Team Leader, Mr Paul Baxter, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Chair and Ms. Nicci Stilwell, Unit Manager at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in New Zealand discussed on perceptions and potential of INSARAG teams supporting humanitarian response efforts beyond operations in structural collapses. The panellists shared their experience and discussed that INSARAG teams have to be agile and flexible should the international request requires other support besides USAR. Teams who offer to provide other capacities, must be trained and equipped needless to say, and respond in the required capacity, to save lives.

There were indeed positive areas on flexible response to saving lives beyond collapse structure situations, as reported by several member countries, however this is cannot be defined directly as an INSARAG team response as the fundamental mandate of INSARAG i.e. collapse structure rescue, and diversifying services could dilute this core mandate. Furthermore, the issue of quality assurance, for example, an INSARAG team responding to floods - the effectiveness of that response cannot be measured or verified by the current INSARAG system. These responses while crucial in humanitarian lifesaving, will require new sets of criteria to be measured against, and can for now, be categorised as bilateral assistance amongst member countries. Further discussions and consultations will take place at regional level, which will plan the way ahead and the potential fields of engagement of the USAR teams.

Session 8 – Meeting Summary and Directions for 2019 towards the INSARAG Global Meeting in 2020

Ambassador Bessler elaborated on the Summary of Decisions for ISG 2019 as follows:

1. INSARAG National Accreditation Processes (NAP) – Regions take ownership, **support and promote NAP**;
2. USAR teams continue **to strengthen the pool of UC** trained personnel;
3. Directed the IMWG to provide technical guidance, training and implementation plan, to **keep pace with technological advancements**;
4. **Endorsed the Light Team (L-USAR) Checklist (See Annex H)**
5. Approved the **IEC/R Team Leaders and Mentors Workshop** for 2019
6. Directed Regional Groups to discuss and consult on the **INSARAG Strategy 2020-2025** – to be launched in the INSARAG Global Meeting in Warsaw, Poland;
7. Directed the GRG to conduct extensive consultations in 2019 on the **draft guidelines** and encourage global feedback;

8. Directed the Regional Chairs to discuss on the **Policy and Operational Issues for 2019** (in Annex G);
9. **Endorsed the work of the INSARAG Working Groups** and agreed on the continuation work on their assigned tasks.

Ambassador Manuel further reiterated the strength of the network to take ownership and commitment and encouraged them to continue strengthening bilateral cooperation and engagements in their regions. He also commended Member States for their inputs and to support their respective regional chairs in executing their plans. The INSARAG draft Agenda 2019 can be found in **Annex I**.

Session 9 – Closing Remarks

The Director of the Coordination Division at OCHA, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, commended the ISG network for their constructive engagements in the meeting. He singled out the INSARAG model as an exemplary model for the humanitarian community, and guaranteed OCHA's full commitment to support the INSARAG network moving forward.

Ambassador Bessler on behalf of the network thanked the Director of OCHA and acknowledged that this is all possible due to the strong commitment and leadership of the regional Chairs and Troika, and the INSARAG member countries supporting. He gave a word of huge thanks to all participants (and a special mention to global participants celebrating the Chinese Lunar New Year in the same week as the HNPW) and the Secretariat for their hard work in organising a successful ISG 2019.

Annexes:

- Annex A - Agendas of the ISG Meetings
- Annex B - Participants list from the ISG Open Meeting
- Annex C - INSARAG Annual Snapshot 2018
- Annex D - Letter of Intent between INSARAG and OAF
- Annex E - INSARAG Global Meeting 2020 Concept Note
- Annex F - ISG Decision Matrix 2018
- Annex G - ISG Issues for Discussion in 2019
- Annex H - Light INSARAG IEC/R Checklist
- Annex I - INSARAG draft Agenda 2019