



# XVI ANNUAL MEETING of the INSARAG Americas Regional Group

29-30 November 2017 | Guayaquil, Ecuador

## CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

The XVI meeting of the INSARAG Americas Regional Group was held on from 29 to 30 November 2017 in Guayaquil, Ecuador. It was hosted by the Government of Ecuador in its capacity as Regional Chair and prepared jointly with the I and II Vice-chair, Mexico and Argentina respectively, as well as with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in its capacity as INSARAG Secretariat.

The meeting was opened by Minister Alexandra Occles, Secretary of Risk Management of Ecuador as INSARAG Americas Regional Chair. The following people also gave opening speeches:

- Mr. Enrique Ponce, Undersecretary of Preparedness and Response, Ecuador
- Mr. Arnaud Peral, Resident Coordinator Residente of the United Nations System in Ecuador
- Amb. Manuel Bessler, Delegate for humanitarian aid and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, President of INSARAG
- Mr. José Francisco Cevallos, Governor of the Guayas Province, Ecuador

The meeting gathered a total of 45 participants from 17 countries of the region, one country from the Africa, Europe and the Middle East (AEME) region, as well as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in its capacity of INSARAG Secretariat. The countries and organizations were all represented by their INSARAG focal points or in delegation of the focal points, as well as with some UNDAC members and UNDAC focal points.

The IV Regional UNDAC consultation meeting took place immediately after the Regional Group meeting. The summary of the UNDAC meeting is available separately with OCHA.

Below is the summary of the meeting. All the presentations and meeting documents are in the Virtual OSOCC (<http://vosocc.unocha.org>) and on the INSARAG website [www.insarag.org](http://www.insarag.org).

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## 1. INSARAG in the Americas – Action Points from 2016 and Activities in 2017

The Regional Chair recalled the regional work plan for 2017, which was developed on the basis of the contributions received the previous year. He informed that progress or full implementation was achieved with most of the proposed objectives and activities for the year, achieving important steps towards the strengthening of the region in the area of search and rescue. The following achievements were highlighted:

- The adoption of proposal on the INSARAG External Support and Recognition Process (IESRP) for national USAR team accreditation processes by the INSARAG Steering Group in February 2017;
- The translation of the USAR Coordination Manual by Argentina;
- The INSARAG External Classification of Bomberos de Chile as a Medium USAR Team;
- The publication of the Practical Guide for INSARAG Focal Points;
- Two USAR Coordination Courses (in the United States and in Costa Rica);
- The representation of INSARAG in the MIAH Meeting and the reference to the network in the resulting Lima Declaration;
- The strengthening of coordination amongst the Regional Chairmanship Group (for example, nine teleconferences were held and three Regional Bulletins were issued); and
- The support of the Regional Group to INSARAG events throughout the year.

However, some pending challenges remained for 2018, due to various factors including time. They are summarized below:

- The finalization of the Regional Assessment of National USAR Team Capacities, due to the fact that fewer than half of the countries in the region filled out the questionnaire;
- The translation of the SIMEX package and organizing a workshop on SIMEX methodology, due to the fact that there was no Regional Earthquake Exercise held in 2017;
- The development of guidelines on the use of the INSARAG logo and the request for the formal recognition of the logo; and
- Strengthening the communication framework between the Regional Chairmanship Group and the countries in the region.

***Recommendation 1.1.:*** *The Regional Chairmanship Group for 2018 shall consider the challenges and pending tasks with the aim of ensuring continuity to the work in the region. In particular, the need to use the IESRP, organize the Regional Earthquake Exercise (with the focus on “going back to basics”) finalize the regional assessment of national USAR capacities are stressed.*

## 2. INSARAG Global Updates and Updates of Working Groups

The session was facilitated by Mr. Sebastián Mocarquer from Chile. The Chair of the INSARAG Training Working Group, Mr. Dewey Perks from the United States, presented the progress achieved throughout the year, putting emphasis on:

- The delivery of the first three ToT USAR Coordination Courses. The first edition of this course in Spanish will take place in Costa Rica from 4 to 8 December, and the second is scheduled for September 2018 also in Costa Rica. The WG has developed a package containing session plans, presentations, relevant documents, the exam and a planning checklist, among other resources.
- The publication of the USAR Coordination Manual in July. The Spanish version is currently being revised and will be published by the end of the year. The purpose of the Manual is to provide guidance on USAR coordination methodology, as well as to train and prepare USAR team members for operations. It was also clarified that, while the INSARAG Guidelines describe “the why” and “the what” of USAR coordination, the Manual explains “the how.”

Mr. Perks highlighted that the leadership of the Americas region in training EXCON members for simulation exercises should be replicated in other regions. He also presented the progress of work by the Medical Working Group (MWG), which focused on the collaboration with the Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) initiative and on clarifying the relationship between the medical component of a USAR team and the EMTs. In 2018, the MWG suggests to continue with this focus, as well as to elaborate guidance notes on medical logistical considerations for USAR teams and to revise existing notes bringing them in line with WHO documentation.

Mr. Arjan Stam from the Netherlands, Chair of the INSARAG Light Team Quality Assurance Working Group, presented the four options to guarantee the quality of international light USAR teams developed by the WG, as the basis for further group discussions on the issue. Feedback from the three Regional Meetings will be presented to the Steering Group in February 2018 for its decision on one of the four possible options:

- Option 1 – Self-assessment with oversight by the national focal point
- Option 2 – Use of a checklist process, linked to the National Accreditation Process
- Option 3 – Light Classification Process
- Option 4 – Full Classification Process (IEC/IER)

Mr. Martijn Boer from the Netherlands, member of the INSARAG KoBo Working Group, presented the progress and plans of the WG for 2018. He highlighted that, as of 1 January 2018, USAR teams undergoing the IEC process will need to demonstrate their ability to use KoBo.

Finally, Mr. Jesper Lund, Secretary of INSARAG, presented the concept of pre-greening for INSARAG External Reclassification and asked for interested countries to send their feedback on the topic to the Secretariat. He also stressed the importance of more countries from the region, through thematic experts, participating in the activities of INSARAG working groups. The Secretariat commits to finding options to support countries willing to do it.

***Recommendation 2.1.:*** *Members of the Regional Group are encouraged to provide their contributions on the topic of Pre-greening to the INSARAG Secretariat ([insarag@un.org](mailto:insarag@un.org)), in particular with recommendations of how to make the IER process lighter while maintaining quality assurance. The concept note is available on the Virtual OSOCC.*

***Recommendation 2.2.:*** *More experts from the region are encouraged to apply to become members of global working groups when such opportunities arise.*

### 3. Experience and Lessons Learnt from the 19 September 2017 Mexico Earthquake

The session, which was facilitated by the Regional Chair, consisted of a series of presentations on the experience and lessons learnt in the response to the earthquake of 19 September 2017 in Ecuador. The first presentation was done by the Government of Mexico, through the INSARAG focal point, Mr. Ricardo de la Cruz Musalem, who noted that the Mexican response system was put to a test not only by the 19 September earthquake, but by a total of six hurricanes and two earthquakes (the 8.2M on 7 September and 7.1M on 19 September) in a month. The national response included the activation of Plan MX and of the National Emergencies Committee, as well as declarations of emergency situations which allowed to rapidly release the required funds.

For the first time in many years, Mexico received support from the international community, which implied some challenges but served as a learning opportunity. One of the challenges was to provide logistics support to arriving international teams, as some of those arriving were not professional, self-sufficient or even requested. These unsolicited teams complicated the response. Another challenge were the communications and the false information which began circulating through social networks immediately following the earthquake. Although national USAR teams in the country are consolidated, there is a need to invest more in these teams and in preparedness. Among the positive aspects, the usefulness of the UNDAC team and the INSARAG network were highlighted.

After the presentation on national response, Mr. Juan Pablo O’Farrill, Team Leader of the UNDAC team which deployed to Mexico, and Mr. Sebastián Mocarquer who was a member of that team, presented the teams findings and its recommendations on USAR operations (these are outlined in Annex C).

Following this, the floor was opened also to each of the countries who deployed a USAR team so that they briefly present on their deployment answering the following questions:

- When did your team arrive and with what capacity?
- What should you/ your team do differently in the future in order to improve the implementation of the INSARAG Guidelines and the efficiency of USAR operations?

The focal points from the following countries presented their experience and recommendations: Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama and the United States. Although all focal points noted how enriching the deployments had been, they also stressed the political pressure under which they are working. The experience of the response again proved the need to have the necessary mechanisms, procedures and protocols for activation and coordination of the response covering all key entities, including the highest political level and the diplomatic component.

The discussion focused on the following issues:

- The difficulty and necessity to find the right balance between enabling a rapid mobilization of USAR teams and the assessment of the need for international USAR capacity. The importance of quickly sharing information on the Virtual OSOCC was stressed, including if the mobilization of USAR teams is through bilateral agreements. The affected countries need to communicate if they require international USAR teams or not as soon as possible. There is a need for strong protocols for these processes.

- The political and diplomatic aspects of mobilizing international assistance, including USAR teams. The 19 September earthquake coincided with the UN General Assembly session, thus the Mexican Foreign Minister received in-person offers of assistance from his counterparts. It is important to know and understand existing bilateral agreements, ensuring that the INSARAG community is informed when they are activated. Although refusing assistance is complicated at the diplomatic level, it is important to continue closing the gap between the political and operational levels in both sending and receiving countries.
- The importance of following national and international protocols. It is important for the INSARAG Guidelines to reach local response mechanism and to be integrated in the normative response framework. Some USAR teams arrived in the country almost a week following the earthquake, others were not self-sufficient. Not all USAR teams “spoke the same language”, for instance in terms of marking, which sometimes made working in a coordinated fashion difficult.
- The presence of non-professional USAR teams and the response of the civil society made access to work sites difficult and resulted in frustration as “everyone felt they were a rescuer.” It is important that the society understands that USAR operations require specialist knowledge and skills and is a dangerous undertaking. At the same time, the need to know of the existence of these teams and giving them a space was stressed, as they are present in emergencies in any case.

***Recommendation 3.1.:*** *The Regional Group shall explore options to assist countries receiving and deploying USAR teams to make the communication between the operational and political levels more agile during emergencies, in order to ensure that teams are only deployed when they are required, and in that case, for the deployment to be quicker.*

***Recommendation 3.2.:*** *The Regional Group and particularly the INSARAG policy focal points shall insist with their national authorities on the need to have well prepared teams, trained in the INSARAG methodology and self-sufficient before offering them for international deployment.*

***Recommendation 3.3.:*** *The Regional Group shall continue promoting the use of the INSARAG methodology in the Americas region. The INSARAG Guidelines need to be known, albeit at different levels of depth, by all operational and political levels in every country.*

#### **4. Implementation of the IESRP of National USAR Team Accreditation Processes**

The participants split into two groups to discuss the next steps following the approval of the IESRP by the INSARAG Steering Group. Mr. Martín Gómez from Argentina led the discussions and presented the feedback on the process from the other two regions, as he had represented the Americas in their respective regional meetings. There were many countries outside the Americas region interested in national accreditation processes, but the IESRP concept seemed unclear to many. However, at the Americas regional level, the process was considered fully developed, the IESRP Manual is available on the INSARAG website and the Technical Support Group roster has been operationalized. It was agreed that the activation of this mechanism in 2018 will be a priority for the Regional Group. Chile, Guatemala and the United States offered to pilot the mechanism. As the national accreditation processes in these countries have diverse characteristics, having the pilots there will further strengthen and consolidate the mechanism.

***Recommendation 4.1.:*** *The Regional Group recommends for the IESRP Manual be incorporated in the INSARAG Guidelines 2020.*

***Recommendation 4.2.:*** *The Regional Group shall continue promoting national accreditation processes and the use of the IESRP mechanism in 2018.*

#### **5. International Light USAR Team Quality Assurance**

The participants split into two groups to discuss the four options to guarantee the quality of international light USAR teams, which Mr. Arjan Stam from the Netherlands had presented earlier. The regional consensus was clear: light teams should be used to respond only at the community/national level, and that INSARAG should promote strengthening national capacity instead of international deployment of such teams. There was a concern with the exponential increase in USAR teams if this concept is rolled out, and with the potentially negative impact this could have on the national accreditation processes across the region. The Regional Group unanimously agreed on the following:

1. The description on what constitutes a Light USAR team in Volume II, Manual A of the INSARAG Guidelines needs to be enhanced.
2. Light teams should not be encouraged to deploy internationally.
3. Should the decision be made that light teams would be part of an international USAR response, they should undergo the full IEC process to assure their quality (Option 4).

***Recommendation 6.1.:*** *The Regional Group recommends that the Steering Group take into consideration its contributions in its next meeting on 8 February 2018.*

## 6. UCC and KoBo Implementation

The group discussion, led by Mr. Martijn Boer from the Netherlands, focused on the KoBo Application. There is, nevertheless, a lot of interest in the use of the UCC methodology to coordinate both national and international teams. The USAR Coordination Manual has been translated into Spanish. Mr. Boer presented the application and its features and the way to download the application and the forms to be used. The consensus in the group was that there is not enough knowledge in the region about this tool, and more training is needed. The issue of whether KOBO could be used in the context of a small scale disaster at national level was discussed.

Argentina offered to translate the KOBO forms into Spanish after several participants expressed the fact that the forms being in English made it difficult for countries to use it because of the language. They also offered to develop an e-training on VOSOCC and KOBO.

***Recommendation 8.1.:*** *The Regional Group recommends that the KoBo Working Group develop a course or a tutorial on the use of the application, which should then be translated into Spanish and adapted to regional realities.*

## 7. INSARAG Guidelines Feedback and Version 2020 Discussions

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer from Chile led the two discussions in groups, starting each with a presentation about the 2015 Guidelines, where significant changes were made as compared to the previous versions. The 2020 version will only be an update without any very significant changes. Below is a summary of the recommendations for the revision of the three volumes of the INSARAG Guidelines.

### Volume I: Policy

The participants agreed that Volume I was useful, and felt that aspects of it should be strengthened. Above all, the revised version needs to be accompanied with strong dissemination, ensuring the internalization of INSARAG policy by decision-makers.

*Concrete recommendations:*

- Strengthen the emphasis on the relationship and collaboration between the Policy and Operational Focal Points;
- Revise and expand the annex with the ToRs for the Policy and Operational Focal Points; include the requirement for both to participate in regional meetings;
- Strengthen the involvement of foreign ministries, in light of their role in the activation and mobilization of international response. This could be done through Permanent Missions in Geneva and in available international fora, such as the MIAH meetings, the Sendai Framework and the UN General Assembly, or the possibility for the Policy Focal Points to be sourced from the foreign ministries;
- Link USAR-related processes to a normative and legal framework, so that INSARAG methodology is part of State and not Government policy. That way it will be possible, at least to some extent, to address the challenges brought forth by transitions between governments;
- Develop a dissemination and internalization strategy to political stakeholders, including key messages.

### Volume II: Preparedness and Response

Many participants stressed the usefulness of Volume II, especially of its Manual A, for the design of national accreditation processes, which, in turn, are necessary for the operationalization of the Guidelines. In some countries, such as Guatemala, they were adopted by law at the national level. In this case as well, the need to promote the Guidelines more widely through standard materials and training was highlighted.

*Concrete recommendations:*



- Incorporate the IESRP Manual;
- Strengthen Manual B with more guidance on its implementation;
- Also on Manual B, reflect on the complementarity between the OFDA Incident Command System and the INSARAG Methodology;
- Incorporate the relationship between the concept of light teams and national accreditation processes;
- Strengthen the references and guidance on radiological detection.

### Volume III: Operational Field Guide

*Concrete recommendations:*

- Expand it so it becomes a complete reference document;
- Strengthen the capacity of EXCON staff to deliver quality simulation exercises allowing to put the Guide in practice.

It is also recommended to improve the transition between the three volumes, ensuring a logical sequence between the preparedness and response parts.

**Recommendation 7.1.:** *The Regional Group recommends that the Guidelines Revision Group take into consideration its contributions.*

**Recommendation 7.2.:** *The Regional Group shall continue promoting the Guidelines at all political and operational response levels.*

**Recommendation 7.3.:** *The Regional Group shall make active contributions to the process of revision of the INSARAG Guidelines.*

## 8. Experiences of Preparation for and of the INSARAG External Classification

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer, Executive Director of the IEC Bomberos de Chile Process, presented the preparation for the IEC exercise, which had taken place from 15 to 17 November 2017. Among other reflections, the following was stressed:

- The benefits of active participation in the INSARAG network;
- The need to observe as many IEC/IERs as possible;
- The need not to underestimate the required effort or budget;
- That the biggest return on investment is obtained through building national capacity and that new developments, procedures, training, skills, etc. obtained through the IEC serve as a new point of reference for national teams.

The Regional Group congratulated Bomberos de Chile for this achievement, a landmark in the trajectory of the INSARAG network in the Americas. It was noted that the IEC is the lodestar for many countries, including for the way they are designing their national accreditation processes.

## 9. Regional Assessment of National USAR Team Capacities

Mr. José Perdomo from Colombia presented the progress with the regional assessment of national USAR capacities, which had been requested by the Regional Group again the previous year. Less than 50% responses were obtained. The results indicated, inter alia:

- That the 11 countries that responded have 67 teams recognized by their Policy Focal Points. 72.2% of these teams are governmental;
- That most of the teams reported self-sufficiency as stipulated in the INSARAG Guidelines, which contradicts what has been evidenced in the responses to earthquakes;
- The existence of a significant demand by USAR teams of training in the INSARAG methodology (OSOCC, RDC, forms) and in technical rescue, as well as of national simulation exercises;
- Limited use of virtual OSOCC by teams (55.9%).

There is a need to understand why participation in the assessment has been so limited to date, despite the significant efforts to involve more countries. It was emphasized that the purpose of this exercise is not to point at anyone, but to understand where the region is standing in relation to the national response capacity. The discussion evidenced divergent opinions on which USAR teams should be included (all, only recognized or only accredited), and if the questionnaire should be sent directly to the teams or through the INSARAG Focal Points.

Mr. Martín Torres from Argentina presented the form used in his country and proposed to apply it at the regional level, emphasizing that it was necessary to unify different processes and simplify the instrument (for instance, by making the questions more pointed).

***Recommendation 9.1.:*** *The Regional Group recommends to continue with the assessment to obtain a regional picture and a regional analysis report. A regional working group led by Argentina will be established and will share a roadmap for comments in the first quarter of 2018.*

## 10. INSARAG Strategy 2017-2020 and Contributions to the Regional Work Plan 2018

The purpose of the session was (1) to review and adapt the specific objectives of the Regional Group for 2018; and (2) to gather contributions from the members of the Regional Group for INSARAG activities in 2018. Mr. Ricardo de la Cruz Musalem from Mexico introduced the session and presented the INSARAG Strategy 2017-2020, which had been adopted by the INSARAG Steering Group in February 2017. Then, the participants split into three groups and discussed whether it was necessary to review the regional objectives within the framework of the INSARAG Strategy, as well as the regional work plan for 2018.

The Regional Group agreed that the objectives of Goal 3 (Improve the management and leadership of the Regional Group) continue to be valid. The participants proposed concrete adjustments, activities and, in some cases, made commitments for their implementation. In 2018, the following is recommended:

- Prioritize the realization of the Regional Earthquake Exercise. It is also recommended to organize simulation exercises at sub-regional levels (for example, the South Cone, Andean countries, Central America). The focal point of the exercises should be the national capacities and testing national protocols, rather than the international actors. It is also recommended to organize training for EXCON personnel from countries interested in organizing national and regional exercises.
- Create and consolidate the Working Group on the regional assessment of capacities of national USAR teams. It would be good to have a document ready for the Humanitarian Networks and Partnership Week (February 2018).
- Use communication and information technologies to scale the reach and possibilities of training initiatives.
- Review and communicate mechanisms of emergency activation, as well as those of requesting and offering international assistance, and in particular USAR teams.
- Facilitate a greater and better relationship between the countries, fundamentally the countries which, for financial reasons or of limited national capacity, have moved away from the Regional Group. Prioritize bringing Brazil and Canada, as well as Caribbean countries and CDEMA to the Regional Group.
- Constantly review progress and update on challenges in responding to the needs of countries.
- Organize meetings exclusively at the level of Policy Focal Points.
- Include the foreign ministries so that that the focal points have a better reach, possibly their staff being nominated as Policy Focal Points.
- Include an internal communications strategy in the ToR of the Policy and Operational Focal Points, establish accountability/reporting mechanisms of focal points to the INSARAG Secretariat.
- Participate more actively in global forums on emergency preparedness and response.
- Develop a comprehensive, multi-level communication strategy involving Member States (at the level of foreign ministries), INSARAG focal points, Government institutions and the INSARAG Secretariat.

The following commitments were made:

- Argentina proposed to host the Regional Earthquake Exercise in 2018 because it considers of the utmost importance to test its national protocols. Cuba proposed to organize one in 2019, and the Dominican Republic in 2020.
- Colombia will invite a group of observers to the IEC exercise in March 2018.
- Chile, Guatemala and the United States committed to activate the IESRP mechanism.
- Argentina will develop an e-learning course on the use of the Virtual OSOCC and KoBo.
- Costa Rica will host a USAR Coordination Course in September 2018.

***Recommendation 9.1.:*** *The Regional Chairmanship Group is asked to take into account the contributions of the Regional Group in the preparation of the work plan for 2018.*

***Recommendation 9.2.:*** *Countries are requested to confirm their contributions to the activities to the Regional Chairmanship Group and the INSARAG Secretariat ([eidimtaite@un.org](mailto:eidimtaite@un.org), [insarag@un.org](mailto:insarag@un.org)).*

## 11. Announcement of international events

### Regional Meeting on International Humanitarian Assistance Mechanisms (MIAH)

Mr. Darío Alvarez from the OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) presented the results of the meeting, which had taken place from 7 to 9 November, 2017 in Lima, Peru. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a regional space for dialogue on humanitarian action, promoting humanitarian principles and strengthening alliances. A total of 18 countries, 10 United Nations agencies, the RCRC Movement, as well as seven NGOs, representatives of civil society and five sub-regional organizations participated. One of the main outcomes of the meeting is the Lima Declaration, which includes the commitment of the region to continue promoting the development of a regional search and rescue framework and the coordination of response teams within the INSARAG infrastructure.

### Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW)

Mr. Jesper Lund, the Secretary of INSARAG, presented the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW), which will be held from 5 to 9 February, 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. The HNPW offers the opportunity to all preparedness and response networks such as INSARAG, UNDAC, EMT, UN-CMCoord and others to meet in a forum. The focus of this edition will be on collaboration. Mr. Lund acknowledged that the absence of interpretation would hinder the participation of the countries of the region. He also informed that, although some sessions will be closed to their respective members, all the members of the Regional Group are invited to participate in the week, and if they require personalized invitations, they should request them from the INSARAG Secretariat ([eidimtaite@un.org](mailto:eidimtaite@un.org), [insarag@un.org](mailto:insarag@un.org)). You can register on the website [www.hnpw.org](http://www.hnpw.org).

## 12. Designation of the Regional Chairmanship Group for 2018

The Secretariat informed the Regional Group that it had not received candidacies for the position of II Vice-Chair. However, during the session, the Dominican Republic expressed its interest in taking on this position, which would be confirmed in January 2018.

Based on the above, the following designation of the Regional Chairmanship Group was made:

- The Regional Group confirmed the designation of Mexico, represented by Mr. Ricardo de la Cruz Musalem, Director-General of Civil Protection, as Regional Chair for 2018.
- The Regional Group appointed Argentina, represented by Amb. Alejandro Daneri, President of the White Helmets Commission, as I Regional Vice-Chair for 2018.

## 13. Acknowledgements

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its capacity as INSARAG Secretariat and on behalf of all participants in this meeting and the members of the Regional Group would like to thank the Government of Ecuador for the excellent organisation of this meeting and for the determined leadership of the Regional Group throughout the whole year.

**INSARAG Secretariat**  
**Emergency Response Support Branch**  
**Coordination Division, OCHA**



## Annex A: Final Meeting Agenda

### Wednesday, 29 November

08.00-08.45	<b>Registration of participants</b>
09.00-09.30	<b>Opening</b>
09.30-10.00	<b>Introduction of Participants and Adoption of Agenda</b>
10.00-10.30	<b>Group Photo and Coffee Break</b>
10.30-11.00	<b>INSARAG in the Americas</b> Action points from 2016 and activities in 2017
11.00-12.30	<b>Updates from INSARAG Working Groups and Steering Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Medical</li> <li>• Light Teams Quality Assurance</li> <li>• KoBo</li> <li>• IER Pre-Greening Arrangements</li> </ul>
12.30-14.00	<b>Lunch</b>
14.00-15.30	<b>Experience of the Response to Mexico Earthquakes</b>
15.30-16.00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
16.00-18.00	<b>Group Discussions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the INSARAG External Support and Recognition Process (IESRP) of national USAR accreditation processes</li> <li>• Light Teams Quality Assurance Standards</li> </ul>
19.30	<b>Official Dinner</b>

### Thursday, 30 November

09.00-11.15	<b>Opening of the day</b> <b>Group Discussions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UCC and KoBo Implementation and IEC/R Requirements</li> <li>• INSARAG Guidelines Feedback and Version 2020 Discussions</li> </ul>
11.15-11.45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
11.45-12.15	<b>Report Back from Group Discussions</b>
12.15-13.30	<b>Lunch</b>
13.30-14.45	<b>INSARAG Topics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences of preparation for and of INSARAG External Classification</li> <li>• Regional mapping of national USAR capacities</li> </ul>
14.45-15.45	<b>INSARAG 2017-2020 Strategy and Contributions to the Regional Work Plan in 2018</b>
15.45-16.15	<b>Coffee Break</b>
16.15-17.00	<b>International Events</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results of the VIII Regional Meeting of International Humanitarian Assistance Mechanisms (MIAH)</li> <li>• The Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW) in Geneva: Opportunities for the Region</li> </ul>
17.00-17.30	<b>Designation of the Regional Chairmanship Group for 2018</b>
17.30-18.00	<b>Closing</b>

# INSARAG Americas Regional Group WORK PLAN 2017



## Goal 1: Promote and support the building of effective national USAR response “Think Global, Act Local”

- 1.1: Promote adoption by national governments and USAR teams of INSARAG methodology for preparedness and response and the establishment of national USAR team accreditation systems
- 1.2: Advocate for national and regional ownership of preparedness efforts and coordination of donor involvement, as needed, in-line with national priorities.
- 1.3: Actively encourage innovative approaches to strengthen national capacity building through the sharing of expertise and best practices amongst countries and organizations
- 1.4: Promote capacity development of national and “first” responders understanding that majority of live rescues is achieved by them.
- 1.5: Strengthen the collaboration and coordination with all relevant partners in preparedness for disasters.
- 1.6: Promote the participation and incorporation of new countries and organizations into the INSARAG network

Regional objective	Regional Group activity	Indicator	Target	Date	Responsible	Verification source	Status
<b>1.1. Promote knowledge on the INSARAG Guidelines as internationally developed and accepted methodology</b>	Presentation of the INSARAG guidelines to all USAR teams in the region with standardized material provided by the INSARAG Secretariat	USAR teams that have received the presentation	80%	December	Focal Points	Focal Points' reports	<b>Partially completed</b> Presentation available with the Secretariat. Reported having done it: Mexico, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic
	Presentation of the added value of INSARAG to political authorities	Countries and regional organisations where FPs have presented the INSARAG methodology and added value	80%	December	Focal Points	Focal Points' reports	<b>Partially completed</b> Reported having done it: Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic

	Translation of the USAR coordination manual to Spanish and its publication	Published on the INSARAG website	1	August	Argentina	INSARAG Website	<b>Partially completed</b> The translation has been finalised. The manual will be published in the first quarter of 2018.
<b>1.2. Improve the knowledge of the capacities and the requirements of the national disaster managements systems in the area of USAR in the region</b>	Complete the questionnaires of the regional capacity assessment of national USAR teams	Completed questionnaires received by focal points	100%	January-March	Focal Points	Database	<b>Pending</b> Only 50% of countries responded
	Process and analyse the completed questionnaires with the aim of having an updated regional capacity assessment document	Final analysis document based on information provided by countries	1	May	Colombia with final review by the RCG	Document shared with the Regional Group	<b>Completed</b>
<b>1.3. Promote and strengthen the national USAR team accreditation processes and promote a better recognition of national USAR teams within the INSARAG network</b>	Present the proposal and obtain approval by the INSARAG Steering Group	ISG approval	1	February	Colombia, Costa Rica, RCG	ISG meeting Chairman's Summary	<b>Completed</b>
	Create the Technical Support Group (TSG) for the INSARAG External Support and Recognition process for national USAR team accreditation processes	Candidates with the appropriate profile are presented, and a regional roster of experts created on the VOSOCC	25	May	Secretariat and Regional Group	Regional roster	<b>Completed</b>
	Organise the initial workshop of the TSG	All members of the TSG participate and familiarize themselves with the reference guidance and agree working modalities	1	June	Chile, NA WG, Secretariat	Agenda and workshop report	<b>Completed</b> Took place in Chile 20-23 June
	Implement and communicate procedures for the request for support from the TSG	Communicate procedures to the Regional group and TSGs are created for each request for support	100%	Ongoing	TSG and Secretariat	INSARAG website and Virtual OSOCC	<b>Completed</b> IESRP manual is available on the INSARAG website

							and announced in the bulletin
<b>1.4. Foster exchange of experiences in areas of common interest</b>	Document good practices and lessons learnt and create a space on the INSARAG website to publish them	Countries that contribute with lessons learnt	25%	Ongoing	Focal Points	Inclusion of good practices/lessons learned in the platform	<b>Completed</b> 3 documents available to date. Many experiences were shared in the monthly regional bulletins.

## Goal 2: Improve the quality and coordination of international USAR response “Strengthening Effectiveness: As Local As Possible, As International As Necessary”

- 2.1: Promote the United Nations General Assembly Resolution GA 57/150 on “Strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance” and continue to update, evaluate and improve INSARAG methodology to be ‘fit for purpose’.
- 2.2: In disaster response, actively encourage and facilitate the smooth transition from the ‘search and rescue phase’ into the ‘relief phase’ as well as greater integration with the efforts of the international humanitarian community in initial recovery efforts
- 2.3: Actively promote and encourage countries requesting international USAR assistance, to request for INSARAG classified teams to support initial life-saving operations
- 2.4: Strengthen and expand the ongoing technical partnerships established -- such as with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Emergency Medical Teams(EMT) and other international and regional organizations for effective coordination in response.
- 2.5: INSARAG’s role contributes to the international humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction agenda
- 2.6: Strengthen INSARAG’s capacity to contribute to national and international coordination mechanisms

Regional objective	Regional Group activity	Indicator	Target	Date	Responsible	Verification source	Status
<b>2.1 Support interested, disaster/EQ prone countries to strengthen their capacities to receive regional/ international cooperation</b>	Promote and support the organization of national SIMEXes using the INSARAG SIMEX methodology	Number of national SIMEXes using the INSARAG SIMEX methodology	2	End of year	Countries	FP reports	<b>Completed</b> Countries who reported having done it: Argentina, Mexico, Haiti, Panama, Dominican Republic
	Review of protocols for the request and receipt of international USAR teams as part of the support process to national accreditation processes	Conclusions and/or recommendations presented by the TSG	100%	End of year	TSG	Final reports by the TSG	<b>Partially completed</b> Annex C of IESRP manual refers to such protocols. The implementation will depend on the use of the TSG.

	Review of the Spanish translation and publishing of the new INSARAG EQ response Exercise package	Publication of the package	1	May	Secretariat	INSARAG website	<b>Pending</b> Recommended to postpone to 2018
	Organise a workshop for the planning and exercise control group with the aim to train more people to replicate the SIMEX at national level	Participation of staff from key countries and organizations with the appropriate profile to plan and lead the SIMEX at national level	10	September	TBC	List of participants	<b>Pending</b> Recommended to postpone to 2018
<b>2.2. Provide recommendations to teams that have the backup and mandate to deploy internationally to pass the INSARAG External classification</b>	USAR teams officially preparing for the INSARAG external classification	Number of teams successfully classified	1	End of year	Secretariat and Chile	INSARAG Directory	<b>Completed</b> Bomberos de Chile classified as a medium team
<b>2.3. Promote a structured response to emergencies by countries in accordance with the INSARAG Guidelines</b>	Promote the use of the VOSOCC for the exchange of information in cases of emergencies	Registry of usernames by INSARAG focal points	100%	End of year	Focal Points	VO database	<b>Completed</b> Secretariat facilitates registration as required
	Based on the results of the regional capacity assessment, verify and clean the current inputs in the INSARAG directory	Verification of the info on the directory	100%	Mid-year	Secretariat	INSARAG Directory	<b>Partially completed</b>
	Finalise the practical guidance note to focal points on their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the INSARAG Guidelines	Sending the note	1	April	Secretariat with RCG	Email and INSARAG website	<b>Completed</b>
<b>2.4. Strengthen cooperation between INSARAG, the EMT initiative/ PAHO, the UNDAC team and OCHA in the region</b>	Mutual participation of a representation in the respective INSARAG and EMT Regional Group meetings - designation of	Designation of mutual focal points	1	April	Secretariat with RCG	List of focal points	<b>Completed</b>



	contact focal points INSARAG-EMT						
	Share work plans and consider joint activities such as SIMEX, or possibly trainings or workshops	Discussion between INSARAG RCG, Secretariat, PAHO and regional EMT chairmanship group	1	August	Secretariat with RCG	Meeting summary	<b>Completed</b>
	Establish links between INSARAG and EMT focal points are country and organizational level	Coordination amongst focal points at country level	80%	End of year	Focal Points	FP reports	<b>Partially completed</b> Reported having done it: Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic
<b>2.5. Implement training on the coordination methodology, including OSOCC</b>	Organise a training of trainers on the USAR coordination, for IEC teams and teams preparing for and IEC, as well as UNDAC with USAR experience	Number of participants	24	April	USA, Secretariat	List of participants	<b>Completed</b> Took place in the US 3-7 2017
	Organise a training of trainers on the USAR coordination, for staff from USAR response and coordination entities at national level and support mechanisms (UNDAC, INSARAG)	Number of participants	24	December	Costa Rica, Secretariat	List of participants	<b>Completed</b> Took place in Costa Rica 4-8 December 2017
	Trained personnel organise USAR coordination courses in their own countries	Number of countries	2	End of year	Countries	FP reports	<b>Completed</b> Reported having done it: Chile, Mexico, Dominican Republic
	Organise a regional OSOCC operations course	Number of participants	28	June	Costa Rica, Secretariat	List of participants	<b>Completed</b> Took place in Costa Rica 26-30 June 2017
<b>2.6 Ensure representation of INSARAG Americas in</b>	Active participation of the Chairmanship Group in the	RCG representation	1	November	RCG, Secretariat	Minutes of the meeting	<b>Completed</b>

regional and global events and forums	meeting of the MIAH (International humanitarian assistance mechanisms)						
GOAL 3: Improve the management and the leadership of the Regional Group							
Regional objective	Regional Group activity	Indicator	Target	Date	Responsible	Verification source	Status
3.1. Ensure leadership and coordination of the Regional Group activities	Organise the Regional Group meeting	Participation of countries from the Regional Group	80%	November	Ecuador, RCG, Secretariat	Chairman summary	<b>Completed</b> 17 countries represented
	Maintain close contact between members of the Chairmanship group and organise monthly teleconferences	Number of teleconferences	12	Ongoing	RCG, Secretariat	Minutes of the teleconferences	<b>Partially completed</b> 9 teleconferences to date
	Regular information exchange between members of the regional group i) Ecuador: Peru, Colombia, Chile, Bolivia, Canada, USA ii) Mexico: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Cuba iii) Argentina: Paraguay, Brazil, Venezuela, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Antigua & Barbuda, French Antilles iv) OCHA/Secretariat: CDEMA, CEPREDENAC, IFRC, PAHO	Contacts established through WhatsApp, email or phone between members of the chairmanship group and countries under their responsibility	100%	Ongoing	RCG	Minutes of the teleconferences	<b>Partially completed</b> Contacts established but should be improved
	Ensure continuity of the Regional Group governance	Designation of the II Vice-Chair 2018	1	November	Regional Group	Regional meeting Chairman summary	<b>Pendiente</b> Waiting for confirmation

<b>3.2. Clear communication on the activities and priorities of the Regional Group</b>	Regular news bulletins from the Chairmanship group and the Secretariat to the Regional Group	News bulletins sent	4	Regularly	RCG and Secretariat	Email and INSARAG website	<b>Partially completed</b> 3 bulletins have been sent to date
<b>3.3. Contribute to a better management of INSARAG globally</b>	Suggest guidelines on the use of INSARAG logo and request the formal recognition of the logo	Guidelines document and approval of logo	1	December	RCG and Secretariat	Communication to the INSARAG network	<b>Pending</b>
<b>3.4. Facilitate the participation of all interested countries in regional activities by promoting a financial commitment of each country for its own participation; as well as the solidarity and regional cooperation in order to support those that cannot dedicate the required resources</b>	Countries hosting regional activities with try to cover local costs (lodging and food) leaving the responsibility to cover the international travel with participating countries/ institutions	Regional activities hosted and funded by the host country	50%	By activity	Host countries	Admin information notes for events	<b>Completed</b> Of 6 regional activities, 2 covered food and accommodation; 3 covered food.
	Countries interested to organise INSARAG activities with the aim of strengthening their capacities, but lacking the required resources will present requests for support, and the Regional group will endeavour to support the event with the required resources	INSARAG activities supported by countries from the regional group	50%	By activity	Host and donor countries	Admin information notes for events	<b>Completed</b> Chile, Colombia, Mexico, the US have supported activities in other countries in the region by providing facilitators or funding.

## Annex C: Findings of the UNDAC Mission - 7.1M Earthquake, Mexico

### Search and Rescue Operations

#### Observations

1. Strong leadership of the National Civil Protection System at different levels for the coordination of national and international USAR teams.
2. The Government provided continuous logistical support to the USAR teams, covering all the requested requirements, such as transportation, fuel, food, a campsite (Base of Operations) and a demobilization post, among others.
3. The use of the Incident Command System was observed to coordinate both national and international USAR teams, and for the coordination with other institutions that provided support.
4. It is important to strengthen the use of the methodology and coordination tools established in the INSARAG Guidelines, which can facilitate the work of USAR teams, especially with international USAR teams.
5. The presence of a significant number of international USAR teams is observed as compared to the work needs, with a significant disparity among their operational capabilities.
6. The massive mobilization of the civil society generated a significant challenge for the control and security of the work sites where search and rescue work was being carried out, often generating a problem for the teams operating in the area.
7. In the Command Post, the number of people not located by work site was, for the purpose of preparing the overall action plan of the response, not observed in order to establish the prioritization and operational assignments for the USAR teams.
8. Although a Command Post was established in each work site, it was observed that the unified command did not always achieve consistency in its determinations, causing changes in the action plans of each work site.
9. Although there is a significant capacity of USAR search and rescue teams in Mexico, a disparity in the performance capabilities between the different teams was observed.

#### Recommendations

1. It is recommended to strengthen the mechanisms of immediate assessment, in such a way that, in the first hours of the occurrence of a significant incident, a decision whether the situation exceeds the national capacity or not can be made and communicated.
2. Then, by virtue of the decision taken, it is recommended to establish protocols for the request for immediate support from international USAR teams, which can be done through the Office of the Resident Coordinator of the UN, directly through the INSARAG Secretariat or bilaterally to countries with which agreements could be reached. In any case, it is recommended to coordinate the request with the INSARAG Secretariat and keep it informed.
3. Similarly, it is recommended that the request for USAR teams should be made specifically to countries with USAR teams which have obtained the INSARAG External Classification, since it is considered that the capabilities of such teams can make the difference in complex search and rescue operations. It is also recommended to use the full capacity of heavy USAR teams to work in two work sites at the same time, 24 hours a day.
4. In the case of requiring the assistance of international USAR teams, it is recommended to analyze the use of OCHA field coordination procedures, especially those established in the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology, to coordinate the operations of international teams, according to the RDC and OSOCC guidelines, in support of the overall Government response plan. In this context, it is recommended to consider the capabilities of the USAR teams with INSARAG External Classification (IEC) to support this coordination structure, as well as those of the UNDAC team in case their presence in the country is requested.
5. In particular, in the case of response to earthquakes or other incidents that lead to the collapse of structures, it is recommended that the Mexican incident command system be complemented with the methodology of the INSARAG Guidelines, with special attention to what is indicated in Volume II, Manual B: Operations.
6. It is recommended to establish a decision process to declare the end of USAR operations. This identifies when international assistance is no longer required, which can be reported by the Mexican authorities and / or the UNDAC team managing the OSOCC, if applicable.
7. Finally, it is recommended to conclude the national accreditation process as soon as possible, in order to standardize the capabilities of the Mexican USAR teams.

**Annex D: Participants List**

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