

INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting 2020 (Remote) 15 and 16 October 2020

Chairman's Summary

Overview

The INSARAG Asia-Pacific (AP) Regional meeting 2020 was held on 15 and 16 Oct 2020 through video conferencing. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Eric Yap, Commissioner of Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), the AP Regional Chair for 2020, and co-facilitated by SCDF and OCHA Emergency Response Section (ERS) of the Response Support Branch (RSB) in its capacity as the INSARAG Secretariat. The meeting agenda is enclosed in [Annex A](#).

The meeting was attended by 92 officials from diplomatic authorities and national disaster management agencies from 43 countries and organizations, including UN representatives from Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO). The list of meeting participants is enclosed in [Annex B](#). The meeting discussed the AP region's priorities in 2020/2021 in response to INSARAG Strategic Objectives 2021-2026 and the region's position on topics such as flexible response. The inputs would be consolidated and updated in the report to the INSARAG Steering Group in 2021. A representative from USAR NL was also invited to share his experience from the Beirut incident response.

The presentation slides for the meeting proceedings are enclosed in [Annex C](#).

Day 1 (15 Oct 2020)

Session 1 – Welcome and Introduction of the AP meeting agenda, Adoption of the agenda

The meeting commenced with the INSARAG Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific, Ms. Haruka Ezaki welcoming all participants to the virtual meeting. This was followed by opening remarks from INSARAG Global Chair - Ambassador Manuel Bessler, Chief ERS for UN OCHA – Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, and the AP Regional Chair, Singapore – Mr. Eric Yap.

Amb. Bessler thanked all the colleagues from the AP region for their participation. He highlighted three key points: 1) how the unprecedented pandemic affected the community; 2) his appreciation for the 13 USAR teams that responded to the Beirut incident; and 3) the initiatives of INSARAG this year, in celebration of the 30-year anniversary.

Mr. Rhodes Stampa thanked Singapore and all the colleagues for the preparation of this virtual meeting despite the challenges from the pandemic. He also highlighted the importance for INSARAG to operate “beyond the rubble”, as exhibited from the responses to the Beirut incident.

Mr. Eric Yap, AP regional chair, thanked all the participants from AP region and beyond for connecting to this virtual meeting during these challenging times. He emphasized the importance of discussing priorities and activities of the region and the need for the INSARAG network to remain adaptable and flexible to the situation.

Session 2 – INSARAG Global Updates

Ms. Ezaki updated the meeting on the INSARAG global issues as below:

- Almost all INSARAG events requiring physical presence had been postponed to 2021 or later. An exception was the Saudi Arabia IER scheduled for December 2020, which remained in the calendar 2020 thanks to the strong support from Middle East and Europe.
- INSARAG 30-year anniversary Global Meeting, together with regional Team Leaders, and Working Group meeting in Warsaw, Poland had been postponed to October 2021.
- With the current pandemic situation, INSARAG was adapting by maintaining engagement with the network through remote platforms. INSARAG Secretariat maintained an updated event calendar on INSARAG website and requested for regional groups to provide updates, when necessary.
- The lessons learned from the Beirut incident would be discussed at the INSARAG After Action Review (AAR) from 4 to 5 November 2020. OCHA invited focal points to participate in the AAR virtually.
- Two new INSARAG Working Groups (WGs) were established this year: the National Accreditation Working Group (NAWG) and INSARAG IEC/R review Working Group.

Session 3 – Progress report on AP regional Workplan and activities 2020

Singapore shared the key objectives and activities of the AP Region in 2020. In view of the postponement of many activities, such as IERs, regional trainings and Earthquake Response Exercise (ERE), the AP region has developed three initiatives as stated below:

1) Strengthening National and Regional response through National Accreditation Process (NAP) and developing INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) framework in AP region.

- Five members from the AP region (China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Singapore and South Korea) are represented in INSARAG NAWG.
- The AP region would form a regional Technical Support Group (TSG), led by Singapore, to provide support to member states in the AP region that plans to develop NAP or IRNAP.
- Singapore would develop IRNAP framework in 2021/22 and would invite AP members to form a regional TSG. The regional TSG members were invited to participate and observe Singapore IRNAP exercise in 2021.

2) Regional Training Working Group.

- Relevant training led by members of TWG are being planned.
- Virtual platforms for the conduct of training are being explored in 2021 and beyond.

3) Conduct of Virtual Webinars

- BASARNAS Indonesia successfully conducted the 1st SAR Cluster Webinar on SAR operations during COVID-19 with OCHA Indonesia on 15 Sep 2020 and members from the AP region participated in the webinar.
- Singapore would be organizing a three-part Senior Executive Programme in Disaster Management Webinar from 28 to 30 Oct 2020. The session on 30 Oct would focus on the new INSARAG Guidelines 2020 and co-chairs and members of the INSARAG Guidelines Review

Group were invited as speakers for the webinar. Singapore invited members of the AP region to participate.

Session 4 – Updates from Africa, Europe and Middle East (AEME) and America Regions

Mr. Marcin Kendra from Poland gave a presentation on the updates from the AEME region for 2020, on behalf of the AEME Regional Chair - Mariusz Felynowski. Like the AP region, almost all events in 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and all meetings took place remotely. As the event calendar for next year might be overloaded, it was necessary for the AEME region to prioritize events for 2021. Poland would organize the 3rd INSARAG Global Meeting Week in October 2021 in Warsaw. AEME region aimed to keep Strategic Plan (2021-2026) “realistic”, focusing on quality standards, localization, and flexible response.

Mr. Eduardo José Gonzáles Angulo, Americas Regional Chair from Colombia, provided an update through a video message. Mr. Angulo provided an overview of the four priorities in the Americas in 2020, which included: 1) Conducting a survey on flexible assistance, translation of INSARAG Guidelines 2020 as well as translation of the guidance note into Spanish; 2) Participated in the Global WG on National Accreditation Process and supporting countries in implementing IRNAP; 3) Organizing a workshop to design the UC Course and a seminar between INSARAG and EMTs; and 4) Planning of virtual Simulation Exercise and inviting more countries from the region to join INSARAG.

Session 5 – Regional discussion on issues arising from the Global Mid-Year Call and INSARAG Global Updates (including INSARAG Global Strategy 2021-2026)

Ms. Ezaki gave a presentation on the INSARAG Global Updates, highlighting various regional priorities and global events in 2020. With regard to Preparedness and Response, 27 INSARAG Teams have indicated their availability for international deployment. 13 Teams were deployed in Beirut following the port explosions in Aug 2020. INSARAG would also continue to bolster partnerships with local responders and strengthen community preparedness. In view of COVID-19, OCHA had been developing a remote support concept.

THW Germany had successfully conducted the First Responders Programme v2.0 training course in China, Georgia and Iraq and would lead the review of the programme, with the support of the TWG. A “marketing video” would also be developed by Germany for the network. This would be shared with disaster-prone countries to encourage them to adopt this programme for a better prepared community. The v2.0 would be circulated during the ISG 2021 and would be launched at the IGM in 2021.

The INSARAG NAWG virtual meetings began in Aug 2020 and the roadmap would be presented by the Co-Chairs – Ms. Chen Hong (China) and Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer (Chile) on the second day of the meeting. Regional Groups would need to discuss their regional TSG/TRG plans and invite countries willing to adopt the NAP and IRNAP to follow-up.

IECs would be prioritized and teams due for IERs have welcomed the postponement of their IERs by one or two years. The INSARAG Secretariat would share the number of IEC/Rs for 2021/2022/2023 following the response from teams requesting extensions.

With regard to remote events, such as regional meetings, Regional Chairs and members were requested to inform the regional focal points in the INSARAG Secretariat on changes to the calendar. INSARAG Working Groups are also conducting virtual meetings and planning for remote training events in the upcoming months.

In view that the INSARAG Global Meeting was postponed to 2021, Poland would share the new working timeline and draft Warsaw Declaration to be discussed in the ISG 2021. There were also

ongoing system reviews such as IEC/R, Earthquake Response Exercise reviews and Working Group governance survey as well as the development of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026.

In response to the global updates, Singapore informed the meeting that the AP region had drafted the report on AP region's position on flexible response, as well as consolidated responses from the members of the AP region on key INSARAG issues. The AP regional chair would work closely with the INSARAG Secretariat to update the events calendar and development of regional TSG in support of regional NAP/IRNAP requests.

Session 6 – Discussion on AP regional Strategy 2021-2026

Singapore led the discussion on AP regional strategy 2021 to 2026 by sharing the region's priority areas in 2020, which incorporated priority areas set by the previous AP Chairs (Japan and Australia) as well as INSARAG's global strategy, which included localization, reinforcing duality standards, advancing flexible assistance and bolstering partnerships. Mr. Yap, AP Regional Chair stressed the importance for the AP region to stay adaptable to the current global pandemic by exploring remote platforms to continue engagement, as well as the need to advance the national accreditation process in the region.

Singapore would work with the Troika (Indonesia and Australia) and the INSARAG Secretariat to update the AP Regional Strategic Plan 2021-2026, which would be a living document and would align its objectives with the global INSARAG strategic objectives.

Day 2 (16 Oct 2020)

Session 1 – Welcoming participants

The second day of the AP regional meeting started with welcome remarks by Mr. Markus Werne, Head of Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP). Mr. Werne emphasized the importance of localization and regionalization and indicated that the ROAP would work closely with various partners in the region to enhance the readiness to respond to disasters.

This was followed by the clarification of two queries from Japan. With regards to the differences in the INSARAG Strategic Objectives, Ms. Ezaki said that there were changes made after the ISG meeting in 2019. Regarding the invitation of more members from the Pacific region to participate in future AP regional meetings/ events, Ms. Ezaki said that there were plans to engage the members in the Pacific region.

Session 2 – Updates from Working groups

Mr. Lucien Jaggi from the INSARAG Secretariat provided an update on the activities of the Working Groups; namely the Training Working Group (TWG), Medical Working Group (MWG), Information Management Working Group (IMWG), Transitional Guidelines Review Group (TGRG) and the IEC/R Review Working Group.

TWG was working on a number of projects, such as the revision of the USAR Coordination Manual, revision of the Earthquake Response Exercise 2.0, supporting the IEC/R WG on roster review, design and development of the Exercise Handbook, and the updating of the INSARAG First Responder training package.

MWG was developing a position paper on responding in a COVID-19 environment, as well as conducting a survey for teams deployed to Lebanon to collate best practices. LTWG was planning for the first Light Team IEC in Nov 2021.

IMWG was working on the development and delivery of online training courses and resources for ICMS, incorporating INSARAG forms and functions into the ICMS, identifying new ways of utilizing technology to deliver better outcomes, reviewing lessons learned from the Beirut response and recommendations of the IEC/R Review report and securing a long-term funding model for ICMS and subsequent technology improvements. The Guidelines Review Group (GRG) was transitioning to the T-GRG and would organize remote training session and produce a video to launch the guidelines this year. The IEC/R Review WG is reviewing the IEC/R Cadre roster of classifiers, team leaders, mentors and the implementation of the IEC/R system report recommendations.

The co-chair of the NAWG, Ms. Chen Hong provided an update on behalf of the NAWG, which was established in June 2020 this year. Ms. Chen shared NAWG's two-phased work plan (August 2020 – August 2022) and dates of planned meetings. She also explained the concept of the global survey on NAP and IRNAP, which was scheduled to be launched on 1 Nov 2020.

Following the presentation, the representatives from the Philippines and Pakistan expressed their interest in NAP/IRNAP.

Session 3 – Discussion on Flexible Response

The draft report on AP region's position on flexible response was circulated among member states for inputs and comments before the meeting. The report collated responses from the informal meeting held in Jun 2020 and the AP region's survey that was conducted from Aug 2020. Overall, the AP region was in favor of flexible response and majority of members chose option two, i.e. declaration of additional response capacities through the INSARAG system. The report would be submitted to INSARAG and presented during the End of Year call on 19 Nov 2020. Mr. Yap, AP Regional Chair urged members of the AP region to provide additional inputs to the report by the end of Oct 2020 and expressed appreciation to those who have already contributed to the paper. He added that flexible response was necessary as USAR response was also critical for disasters other than earthquakes. Other than the Beirut incident, the increasing frequency of weather-related disasters such as recent Tropical Storm Linfa and Nangka that hit several countries in the Mekong region demonstrated how flexible response would be beneficial to countries in need.

Singapore presented a video depicting the activities carried out by SCDF in support of the health sector since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Singapore. Aside to maintaining emergency response, SCDF took on additional roles such as temperature screening at the airport, managing a quarantine center and temporary dormitory site, conducting swab tests and training of frontline personnel, demonstrating the practical application of flexible response.

Session 4 – INSARAG AP Workplan for 2021 and beyond

Indonesia (incoming Vice Chair) led the discussion on the AP regional workplan for 2021 to 2023. Other than the key INSARAG meetings (i.e. ISG in May 2021 and IGM in Oct 2021), Indonesia proposed several activities for 2021 – 2022, such as the launch of Indonesia NAP, an international USAR Webinar series, supporting Sri Lanka in capacity building, conducting an IRNAP regional road map seminar, sustaining the regional discussion on flexible response and IRNAP regional development in AP region. China updated meeting that the ERE would likely be conducted in 2021. South Korea informed the meeting that they plan to conduct a UC Course in Sep 2021 and their IER in Sep 2023. Malaysia updated the meeting on the conduct of the UC course in Jun 2021 and IER in Jul/Aug 2022. AUS-02 was considering the option to postpone their IER to a later date, while AUS-01 would postpone their IER from 2023 to Aug 2025. Indonesia proposed to conduct an USAR field exercise in 2022.

Session 5 – Call for interest for Regional Chair 2022

The meeting supported South Korea's application as the AP Regional Chair in 2022.

Session 6 – Case Study: Beirut response

Ms. Ezaki provided an overview of the Beirut incident, which was the first INSARAG deployment during COVID-19 and first incident to use the new ICMS. The incident also adopted the new INSARAG guidelines 2020 and was the second deployment to operationalize UCC and DACC. Ms. Ezaki shared the timeline of the event and the information on the response capacities and field collaboration.

This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Erwin Marks from USAR NL, who was involved in managing the UCC in Beirut. Mr. Marks shared the profiles and capacities of the responding teams and the overall area of operations. He also highlighted the close cooperation and coordination between the international teams and the Lebanese government. The ICMS was also proven to be an effective coordination tool in terms of field data collection. Mr. Marks recommended for INSARAG to prioritize ICMS training during this period.

Session 7 – AOB/Conclusion and Closing statements

Bangladesh requested INSARAG Secretariat and AP regional group to organize an online training for their capacity development. The official request would be sent soon. Nepal, having set up its Natural Disaster Management Agency recently, also requested the INSARAG Secretariat and the AP Region's support to restart USAR capacity development, which had been pending since 2014.

Mr. Yap, AP Regional Chair, closed the meeting by thanking all members of the AP region for their participation in the fruitful discussions. He highlighted that the meeting was a good starting point for further actions to enhance the regional capacity and cooperation. He also expressed his appreciation for the support from the troika colleagues, Australia and Indonesia and invited the focal points from Australia and Indonesia to give their closing statements. Mr. Yap also expressed support for Indonesia as the AP Region Chair next year.

Ms. Megan Northrope, on behalf of Australia as an outgoing Vice-chair, thanked Singapore for the strong leadership as the AP regional Chair and the continuous support to strengthen protection in humanitarian responses. Ms. Northrope highlighted the importance of developing the AP Regional Strategy and improving our awareness and reporting mechanisms to ensure safety, security and dignity of communities affected by disasters. She also welcomed Indonesia as the incoming Chair in 2021.

Mr. Bagus Puruhito, incoming Vice-chair from Indonesia, thanked Singapore and INSARAG Secretariat for organizing the meeting. He said that it was important for countries to develop mechanisms that facilitate decision-making, identifying, requesting, and accepting international assistance in timely manner as well as strengthening the national rescue capabilities and capacities. He looks forward to chairing the INSARAG AP Regional meetings in 2021.

Ms. Ezaki expressed appreciation for the number of participants involved in the meeting this year as well as the strong interests of the network during the regional discussions. Ms. Ezaki thanked Mr. Eric Yap and Singapore team for the strong commitment as the AP Regional Chair and for organizing the virtual meeting.

ANNEXES

Annex A: Meeting Agenda

Annex B: Participants List

Annex C: Consolidated Presentation Slides for the Meeting

Annex D: Flexible response AP position paper (draft)

Annex E: Consolidated responses to INSARAG topics