

Chairman’s Summary
INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting
04 May 2021



The INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting of the Global, Regional and Working Group (WG) Chairs was held remotely on Monday 04 May 2021 as part of the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW). It was chaired by Ambassador Manuel Bessler, the INSARAG Global Chair and Deputy Director General, Head of the Humanitarian Aid Department and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit. The ISG included several key speakers: Mr. Rein Paulsen, Director a.i., Coordination Division (OCHA Geneva); Ms. Edem Wosornu, Chief, Response Support Branch (RSB) and Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, Chief, Emergency Response Section (ERS) and INSARAG Secretary. The event was facilitated by the INSARAG Secretariat. Overall, the ISG was attended by 192 participants. The list of registered participants can be found in [Annex A](#).

During the meeting, participants had the opportunity to present their workplans for the regions and WGs. To ensure INSARAG remains fit-for-purpose during the pandemic and beyond, decisions were taken on seven issues arising from the Mid-Year Call on 17 June 2020, the New Year Teleconference on 27 January 2021 and developments over the last five months. The issues have been presented under the four Strategic Objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026: (1) Quality Standards, (2) Localization, (3) Flexible Response, and (4) Partnerships. The ISG PowerPoint presentation is available in [Annex B](#).

Further information on the INSARAG’s participation at the HNPW is available at <https://insarag.org/hnpw/>. The Chairman’s Summaries of earlier meetings and supplementary documents can be found at <http://insarag.org>.

Session 1: Opening Statements

The session was opened by Ambassador Manuel Bessler, who welcomed all participants to the first virtual ISG meeting. He recalled that INSARAG is commemorating its 30th anniversary and commended the achievements of the network in the past three decades to strengthen quality standards at the local, regional and global levels.

Amb. Bessler congratulated the network for its flexibility to adapt and support governments in fighting the pandemic. Some of the key achievements included the response of INSARAG teams to the Beirut Port Explosions on 04 August 2020, the ongoing discussion on the development of the concept of Flexible Response, the classification validity extensions exceptionally granted to the INSARAG External Classification and Reclassification (IEC/R), the review of the INSARAG Guidelines, and the endorsement of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026. Finally, he thanked all members for their engagement in online meetings and trainings and encouraged them to sustain the work of INSARAG despite the pandemic.

Mr. Rein Paulsen highlighted the opportunities of the new remote working modalities due to COVID-19 to connect with a larger, diverse and more inclusive group of participants. He affirmed OCHA’s strong support to INSARAG as well as to its cooperation with National Disaster Management Agencies (NDMAs) of Member States and key humanitarian partners. Mr. Paulsen underscored the professionalism of the INSARAG teams supporting national

efforts during the pandemic and especially the emergency deployment of the 13 INSARAG Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams to the Beirut Port Explosions. Mr. Paulsen emphasized the importance of being flexible and working together to ensure the delivery of life-saving quality services to affected populations.

He added that INSARAG is an inspiring example for humanitarian stakeholders due to its ability to constantly leverage partnerships. He highlighted as good practice the continuous collaboration between the World Health Organization Emergency Medical Teams (WHO EMT) and the INSARAG Medical Working Group (MWG), which have shared good practices and drafted checklists and operational guidelines for operations during a pandemic.

Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa thanked the Global Chair, the Director a.i. Coordination Division, the Regional Chairs, the Troika members, the Technical Working Group Chairs, the INSARAG Teams, the technical partners and the regional organisations for their continuous commitment and unyielding support to INSARAG.

He emphasized that the ISG Meeting is a key occasion for the network to identify achievements and plan the way forward to remain fit-for-purpose and nimble despite the global health crisis, as it was the case of the INSARAG teams and partners who successfully responded to the Beirut Port Explosions.

Additionally, he underscored the importance of intensifying meaningful engagements on the localization agenda as well as to improve the network’s accountability frameworks and services to vulnerable communities. Finally, he reiterated his thanks for the endorsement of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 during the New Year Teleconference, and thanked the Global, Regional and Working Group Chairs for their work to review and strengthen the Strategic Plan.

Session 2: Regional Workplan Progress Updates and INSARAG Global Updates

Regional Workplan Progress Updates

i. Africa, Europe and Middle East (AEME)

Dr. Musiwalo Moses Khangale, Senior Manager of the Fire Services Coordination Directorate and Regional Co-Chair of the AEME Region from South Africa, referred to the strong partnership with the European Union and encouraged the finalisation of the "Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform". He also noted the importance of the first responders training in Iraq and Georgia to strengthen localization. He referred to the prompt response to the Beirut blast, and to the importance of leveraging technologies in the context of the pandemic. Also, he underlined that the review of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will contribute to ensure health and safety of USAR teams and disaster-affected communities.

Dr. Moses then outlined the key achievements of the past months: The conclusion of the French National Accreditation Process (NAP); the hybrid USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) Coordination course in Russia; and the support from the 34 teams from AEME to the IEC/R

extension and the registration of 116 experts in the Regional Cadre Roster. He also introduced the next key events for 2021: The IEC of RUS-3 team in September; the INSARAG Global Meeting (IGM) in October; and the potential USAR Coordination Cell (UCC) training in France.

ii. The Americas

Mr. Alfredo Enrique Murgueyto Espinoza, Head of the National Institute of Civil Defense (INDECI) and Regional Chair of the Americas Region from Peru, indicated that the regional workplan for 2021 is aligned with the INSARAG Strategic Plan for 2021-2026. One of the key achievements in 2021 included the completion of the INSARAG Coordination Management System (ICMS) course using a bilingual virtual platform, which was attended by more than 150 participants. Progress was also reported on the USAR National Accreditation Process (NAP); the INSARAG Recognition of the NAP (IRNAP) for Panama and Honduras; the design of the courses for the IRNAP Technical Support Groups (TSGs) and the Technical Recognition Groups (TRGs); the USAR National Coordination Course with the contribution of regional experts; the region’s contribution to the National Accreditation Working Group (NAWG) with the participation of Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico; as well as the ongoing translation of the INSARAG Newsletter and Guidelines into Spanish.

Mr. Espinoza also informed the participants that the Simulation Exercise (SIMEX) INSARAG in the Americas -planned for June- will be led by Peru and the INSARAG Secretariat, with the participation of regional and global humanitarian partners and countries and the support of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO).

He reported that the region is actively engaged in the discussion on flexible response, and members from the region will be nominated for the Flexible Response Working Group (FRWG). With regard to regional partnerships the region is working with the American Firefighters (OBA) in the development of joint activities, and with the PAHO/WHO in the establishment of a community of practice with the medical component of the USAR teams and the EMTs.

iii. Asia Pacific (AP)

Mr. Mohammad Barokna Haulah, Director for Planning of the National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) and Acting Policy Focal Point of Indonesia, reported on the AP regional achievements in 2020, which included the informal regional New-Year Call, the handover of the Chairmanship, the finalization of the regional work plan and identification of priorities, the completion of the ToR of the Regional IRNAP WG, the development of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the TSGs and the TRGs and the HNPW joint session with the Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) Regional Consultative Group (RCG).

He presented the regional implementation of the four objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan:

1. Quality Standards: The region is strengthening multi-level capacity building and protection in humanitarian responses. The Member States are planning to conduct virtual workshops and webinars on cultural heritage safeguards, gender and protection and operations during COVID-19 as well as ICMS regional trainings and ERE trainings. The IER of New Zealand USAR team and UC courses in Malaysia and South Korea are also planned to take place in 2021.

2. Localization: The NAP is being implemented in Indonesia, Singapore is undergoing its first IRNAP exercise and an international webinar on NAP is planned to take place. There is a capacity building initiative in Sri Lanka, UC courses in Malaysia and South Korea and a regional classifier training.
3. Flexible Response: The region promotes the concept by participating in international webinars.
4. Partnerships: The region actively engaged in several HNPW sessions and organized the joint session with the RCG on CMCoord and a webinar with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA) on coordination response mechanism.

INSARAG Global Updates

Mr. Winston Chang, INSARAG Unit Head, highlighted the alignment of the network’s methodology and systems to the 2020 Guidelines and the launch of the IEC/R Review WG. He informed participants that in 2020 up to 66% of meetings, trainings and exercises have been held remotely since the start of the pandemic, while 9 IEC/R have been postponed for 2021 and 14 for 2022.

He informed participants that the IEC/R 2-year exceptional validity extensions were well received by 97% of the teams preparing for IEC/Rs in 2020 and 2021. Furthermore, a total of 176 experts have applied to the IEC/R Regional Roster of Classifiers. He informed all that the list will be shared with the IEC/R Review Working Group for its review and recommendations. Finally, he congratulated the WHO EMT for their excellent work in jointly drafting the “COVID-19 Deployment Technical Guidance Note” for USAR teams with the INSARAG Medical Working Group (MWG), which has been well received by the network and translated into several languages to enable its global implementation.

Session 3: Technical Working Groups Workplan Progress Updates

WG Chairs/Co-Chairs updated on key activities and workplans.

i. IEC/R Review Working Group (IEC/R WG)

Ms. Annika Coll, the IEC/R Co-Chair from Spain, reported on the review of the classifiers roster, the classifiers’ applications, and the review of the IEC/R system report. The WG will continue working on the requirements for IER extension, the IEC/R system recommendation matrix and the clarification of the WG ToR.

ii. Information Management Working Group (IMWG)

Mr. Peter Wolff, the Co-Chair from THW Germany, referred to some of the key achievements of the WG as follows: All classified and IEC in process teams received their Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) user licence; basic trainings are available for the three regions; and training materials, handbooks and YouTube videos have been uploaded to the ICMS Hub. The INSARAG Coordination Management System (ICMS) was presented at the ESRI Geographic Information System (GIS) conference, and several

individual ICMS training sessions were held on demand. Also, a Virtual Reality ERE was showcased at the HNPW Exhibition Area. He reminded all that the ICMS was used in a deployment for a very first time in Beirut in 2020.

Mr. Wolff also referred to the IMWG workplan, which include the finalization of the ICMS V2.0, the review and update of the WG training material, the development of the UCC training for staff (in close cooperation with the TWG), the development of advanced trainings for ICMS users and the test of QuickCapture (ESRI) to be used for rapid assessment tools.

The IMWG will explore the possibility of providing UNDAC teams, UNEP and UNESCO with relevant mission data, as well as the Damage Assessment team with relevant forms and dashboards. The use of drone images as map layers for the ICMS dashboard and the implementation of a mentor concept for NAP teams are being considered. The IMWG is planning a Virtual Reality ERE.

iii. Light Team Working Group (LTWG)

Mr. Brad Commens, the Co-Chair from Australia, reminded all that due to the pandemic, Light Team IECs have been postponed. Mr. Brad Commens and Mr. Rob Davis have been assigned as the Co-Chairs of the LTWG and Mr. Ajam Stam will continue his participation in an advisory role.

Despite the pandemic, the content for the Light USAR IEC assurance process was completed and approved by the INSARAG network. The first Light IEC for the NGO @Fire International Disaster Response Germany is planned for November 2021 in Geneva, if the situation allows for in-person gatherings. The first Light USAR Classification will help shape the classification process for future Light USAR IEC assessments. There is also a plan to review the Light USAR Classification after the first IEC to maintain standards and to learn for future trainings.

iv. Medical Working Group (MWG)

Dr. Anthony Macintyre, the Chair from the United States, said that their major achievement was the completion of the “COVID-19 Deployment Technical Guidance Note” in 2021. The objectives of this document are to protect the teams and the impacted country from the spread of diseases and to focus on the continuity of operations.

The WG Chair also reported that a very successful meeting between the MWG and the WHO EMT Secretariat took place on 30 April and a joint statement on “Field Response During Times of COVID-19” issued by the INSARAG and WHO EMT Secretariats was drafted. The ISG welcomed the joint statement.

v. National Accreditation Working Group (NAWG)

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer, the Co-Chair from Chile, reported that 48 Member States have responded to a survey conducted on existing NAP and IRNAP. Results have shown that 24 Member States have completed a NAP and 26 more have the intention to do it.

The Co-Chair also reported that from May 2021 to August 2022, the Technical Guidance Note on the IRNAP will be updated to serve as a guide that is adjustable to all regions. The IRNAP Checklist and related documents will also be updated. Moreover, a training for the TSGs and TGRs will be developed with objectives and content that are adaptable to each region. Remote support to regions on methodological issues and interpretation of standards will be given to the TSGs and TRGs.

vi. Training Working Group (TWG)

Mr. Dewey Perks, the Chair from the United States, reported that despite COVID-19, the EMERCOM of Russia conducted a USAR Coordination training course in Khabarovsk from 12-16 April for the RUS-10 team, which hopefully will soon undergo an IEC. The course was, for the first time, conducted virtually by UC instructors from classified Russian teams (RUS-1 and RUS-2), members of the TWG (Mr. Tsukasa Katsube and Mr. Joshua Turner) and a member from the IMWG (Mr. Rob Norman). The objective was the completion of the timeline’s revision by 1 July 2021 which is to be sent for review.

In July 2021, the revision of the UC Training Program will begin, after receiving the revised UC Manual. The WG will divide the work to two sub-groups on different topics and host a general meeting at least once a month.

Mr. Peter Goxharaj will continue developing the First Responders Program (FRP); Mr. Paul Lawless will lead on the EU IER Manual development; and Mr. Tsukasa Katsube and Mr. Dewey Perks will lead on the IEC/R Review. The TWG is planning to work with USAR.NL to deliver an IEC/R mentor and secretariat representative training program that will be led by Mr. Jacob Bolwinkel in 2022.

vii. Transitional Guidelines Review Group (T-GRG)

Mr. Martin Evers, the Co-Chair from The Netherlands, reminded everyone that the T-GRG has followed up on the work done by the Guidelines Review Group (GRG) 2015-2020 and that the Draft ToR have been presented to the ISG. A draft internal working plan is under discussion and a consultation with the other WGs is currently ongoing.

The T-GRG plans to monitor and assist the other WGs to endorse the 2025-2030 Guidelines. With that purpose, the T-GRG follows the WGs’ discussions to present a roadmap for the review of the next edition of the Guidelines for 2025.

Session 4 - INSARAG Steering Group Decisions on Key Issues from the New Year Teleconference

Strategic Objective 1: Quality Standards

1.a Virtual Training and Platforms

Mr. Murgueytio expressed that virtual alternatives are essential for coordination, emergency response and preparedness in the context of the pandemic.

Following extensive consultations between 2015 and 2019, a second more concise and context-specific version of the International ERE V2.0 has been drafted. The program will be covered over five days including a preparation phase, the exercise itself and a final phase of analysis and learning.

The ISG values the contribution of the members, partners and host governments of the network to the completion of the International Earthquake Response Exercise (ERE) V2.0. Given that there is no confirmed date for the next in-person ERE, it is recommended that the ISG provisionally endorses the International ERE V2.0, which will allow the network to improve the document before its final endorsement.

The next ERE SIMEX for the Americas will be held virtually on June 21-25 organized by Peru and the INSARAG Secretariat. It will incorporate simultaneous interpretation in the plenary sessions, and a specific virtual platform developed by the PAHO/WHO for EMT simulation exercises is to be used to perform this exercise.

Decision: The ISG agrees on a provisional endorsement of the International Earthquake Response Exercise V2.0 and welcomes Peru's Virtual SIMEX.

1.b Review of Response Conduct

Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa reported that the INSARAG Secretariat has been requested to establish a review of the conduct of an INSARAG Classified USAR Team following a recent response. In accordance with paragraph 2.6.4 of Vol II, of Manual C of the INSARAG Guidelines, the INSARAG Secretariat, having consulted with the Global and Regional Chairs, has contacted National Focal points to establish an Ad-Hoc Team of experts, balanced by region, gender and organisation. This Team is in the process of contacting all parties involved to establish the facts of what transpired in a transparent and impartial manner and will then make a recommendation to the Global Chair and ISG with regards to the necessary follow-up. The Secretary reminded participants that this is a procedural and not a legal matter for the INSARAG network.

Decision: The ISG looks forward to the report and recommendations on the USAR Team's Review of Response Conduct by the Ad-Hoc Team of Experts.

Strategic Objective 2: Localization

2.a First Responders Programme (FRP) V2.0

Ambassador Bessler encouraged strengthening the effective support to local communities.

Mr. Moses Khangale affirmed that a strong response by local actors is a critical component of any effective disaster response, thus increasing the investment in local communities with limited institutional response capacity is fundamental. Communities are the first responders in the aftermath of disasters, thus becoming essential for local preparedness and resilience.

Mr. Moses Khangale affirmed that local response strategies and programmes should be flexible and context specific. He underlined that the INSARAG network must be able to respond to the evolving needs of communities beyond the typical collapsed structures' scenarios. The response to collapsed structures offered by classified USAR Teams remains essential, however INSARAG should consider adapting its capabilities to respond to

weather-related disasters. The First Responders Programme will be beneficial for many developing countries especially in Africa where rescue capabilities are not well developed. Local risk dynamics must be considered when developing the training program in order to avoid a one-size-fits-all mentality. Funding should be sourced to support the implementation of these trainings.

Decision: The ISG welcomes the opportunity to review the FRP V2.0 and its endorsement at the IGM.

Strategic Objective 3. Flexible Response

3.a A New Flexible Response Working Group (FRWG)

Mr. Barokna informed the group that BASARNAS’s mandate is focused on the national and international emergency response to disasters, to include aeronautical and maritime distresses. BASARNAS cooperates with governmental agencies, the Indonesian armed forces (TNI), the police, the private sector, NGOs and foreign Search and Rescue (SAR) authorities in the conduct of SAR operations. BASARNAS conducts over 1200 operations per year and is increasingly requested to participate in various emergencies, for which it is fundamental that BASARNAS adapts a flexible response.

In 2020, BASARNAS adopted the INSARAG methodology, and INA-01 personnel will be deployed in SAR operations. The pending actions include the needs’ identification, the strengthening of capacity building beyond USAR, the boosting of networking and cooperation with other emergency teams and the support for the acquisition of additional equipment and personnel.

Ms. Haruka Ezaki, the AP Regional Focal Point, announced that the invitations to be part of the FRWG have been shared extensively. The FRWG will be composed of three Sub-WGs focused on three different issues and led by two Co-Chairs from different regions: (1) Flexible Response Global Position, (2) Damage Assessment and Coordination Centre (DACC) and (3) INSARAG’s Role in the Preservation of Cultural Heritage. The deadline for the applications has been extended to **May 31**.

Ambassador Bessler strongly encouraged suitable experts and partners across all regions to apply for the FRWG.

Decision: The ISG encourages suitable experts to join and contribute to the FRWG to facilitate global discussions. The call for applicants is extended to 31 May.

Strategic Objective 4. Partnerships

4.a INSARAG Global Meeting (IGM)

Lieutenant Colonel Michał Langner, on behalf of the INSARAG Policy Focal Point of Poland, reported that the IGM will be held remotely on 6 October 2021. The Ministry of Interior of Poland reached this decision in view of the evolving pandemic situation, which does not allow for an in-person event. The option of a hybrid meeting was discounted as this might lead to unbalanced participation from Member States, with wealthier nations with better access to vaccines disproportionately represented. A concept note is being prepared and will

be discussed with the INSARAG Secretariat prior to its release in May. The Global Chair thanked Poland for the update and for organizing the virtual IGM.

Decision: The ISG agreed that the 3rd IGM will be conducted virtually in October and hosted by Poland. Good lessons from the HNPW will be adopted. The network will be consulted on the agenda.

Additional Note:

- i. The **Regional Meetings will be held before the IGM and led by the Regional Chairs** with support from the INSARAG’s Regional Focal Points.*
- ii. The INSARAG Secretariat will consult the WGs whether the Team Leaders’ Meeting should take place virtually during the second half of 2021 or if it should be postponed to the beginning of 2022. Interested Member States are welcome to contact the Secretariat.*

4.b Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform

Mr. Ilkka Salmi, Director of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), emphasized the importance of fostering the cooperation between the INSARAG network and DG ECHO. He reminded all that this year the European Commission (EC) celebrates 10 years of EU MODEX. The first exercise was held in Germany and since then many USAR teams have participated in the MODEX.

The EC, the Members and participating States of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (EUCPM) value this collaboration highly as it enables the IER to be conducted at the EU MODEX event. The MODEX is one of the key growing elements of the EU Civil Protection Knowledge Network. The EC will increasingly provide opportunities to USAR teams to exercise within the MODEX framework. The “Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform” will contribute to the development of a common multi-hazard cross-sectoral and cross-scenario framework that can be used by teams. Mr. Salmi emphasized that the handbook is an example of successful collaboration among different stakeholders, which will hopefully enable future collaborations.

The INSARAG Secretary thanked the EU Commission team and the WG members for their impressive collective effort and highlighted that the “Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform” is a practical and cost-effective tool for common understanding on IER within the EU MODEX framework. He also suggested exporting good practices from the “Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform” to other regional organizations.

Decision: The ISG welcomes the close cooperation with the EU and endorses the "Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform".

4.c *New Item. Preparedness and response in a pandemic: current plans and good practices

Ambassador Bassler encouraged participants to get vaccinated as it might become necessary for international deployments. He also commended the work of the MWG in drafting the “COVID-19 Deployment Technical Guidance Note” for USAR teams.

Mr. Hamza Tasdelen, Vice President of AFAD and AEME Co-Chair of Turkey, represented by Mr. Yusuf Aysu, Head of Response Department, presented Turkey’s response to the pandemic. Mr. Aysu briefed on the response to the earthquake in Izmir on 30 October 2020, which was an example of a successful mobilization of teams and an effective implementation of health and safety protocols during a pandemic.

Decision: The ISG encourages the exchange of ideas amongst Member States in preparedness and response initiatives in a pandemic and welcomes the joint statement of the INSARAG MWG and WHO EMT on "Field Response during times of COVID-19 Outbreak".

Session 5 - Summary of Key Decisions and Closing Statements

Summary of Key Decisions

Ambassador Manuel Bessler summarised the ISG key decisions, following the earlier presentations led by the Regional Chairs and the ISG members, as follows:

The ISG:

1. **Agrees on a provisional endorsement of the International ERE V2.0 and welcomes Peru's Virtual SIMEX ([Annex C](#)).**
2. **Looks forward to the report and recommendations on the USAR Team’s Review of Response Conduct by the Ad-Hoc Team of Experts.**
3. **Welcomes the opportunity to review the FRP V2.0 and its endorsement at the IGM.**
4. **Encourages suitable experts to join and contribute to the FRWG to facilitate global discussions. The call for applicants is extended until May 31.**
5. **Agrees that the 3rd IGM will be conducted virtually in October and hosted by Poland. Good lessons from the HNPW will be adopted. The network will be consulted on the agenda.**
6. **Welcomes the close cooperation with the EU and endorses the “Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform” ([Annex D](#)).**
7. **Welcomes the exchange of ideas amongst Member States in preparedness and response initiatives during the pandemic.**
8. **Welcomes the joint statement of the INSARAG MWG and WHO EMT on "Field Response during times of COVID-19 Outbreak" ([Annex E](#)).**
9. **Encourages ongoing virtual technical workshops led by the regions and the WGs to strengthen preparedness for effective response.**

Closing Statements

Amb. Bessler welcomed Ms. Edem Wosornu, the new Chief of the RSB, for closing statements. Ms. Wosornu thanked the Global Chair, the INSARAG Secretary, the Regional Chairs and Troika members, the Technical Working Group Chairs and Co-Chairs, the INSARAG Policy and Operational Focal Points and the 56 INSARAG Classified Teams for their continuous commitment and unyielding support to the INSARAG network. She highlighted that INSARAG is a very dynamic and highly respected professional and disciplined network which has constantly adapted its globally recognized standards and methodology for quality preparedness and response.

The Chief of the RSB then underscored the UN General Assembly resolution 57/150 on “Strengthening the Effectiveness and the Coordination of International USAR Assistance” approved in 2002, which underpinned much of the progress achieved over the past three decades in the areas of effective preparedness and quality response at all levels. She referred to INSARAG as a model for humanitarian assistance, with a large network of over 90 Member States and organizations who collaborate for a better humanitarian response.

Ms. Wosornu reiterated that the INSARAG network is committed to pursue the localization agenda, with the First Responders Programme as an example of boosting local capacities. The adoption of a common USAR methodology for effective coordination and structural assessments based on the INSARAG Guidelines is a remarkable achievement that allows USAR teams across the globe to speak a common USAR language.

Ms. Wosornu commended the endorsement of the Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and singled out the recent development of the “COVID-19 Deployment Technical Guidance Note” as an important partnership initiative. The outcomes from the Beirut After-Action Review and the pandemic response side-event during the HNPW are additional hallmarks of the unyielding commitment of the network to serve the people in need. Finally, **she reaffirmed OCHA’s continued strong support to the INSARAG network.**

Ambassador Bessler noted the importance of hosting the ISG within the framework of the HNPW. He thanked Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, the INSARAG Secretariat, and all participants who joined the meeting despite the time differences and accentuated the importance of the meeting to keep INSARAG’s work moving forward.

Interaction of Participants

The ISG chat box was open to all participants and moderated by the INSARAG Secretariat. The chat box was used to share questions, comments, and handouts.

Participants’ questions raised during Sessions 3, 4 and 5 were answered by the INSARAG Secretariat and the respective panelists. The questions concerned access to the handouts, upcoming key dates in the INSARAG global calendar, teams’ standards to respond on behalf of the international community and the usefulness of rescue teams during floods. There was also an enriching discussion among the participants on the development of the Flexible Response concept and the FRWG.

Annexes

- [Annex A](#) ISG Registered Participants
- [Annex B](#) ISG PowerPoint Presentation slides
- [Annex C](#) International Earthquake Response Exercise (ERE) V2.0.
- [Annex D](#) Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform
- [Annex E](#) Joint Statement of the INSARAG MWG and the WHO EMT on Field Response During Times of COVID-19

Drafted by the INSARAG Secretariat – May 2021