

Introduction

The INSARAG New Year Teleconference of Global, Regional and Working Group (WG) Chairs was held remotely on Wednesday 27 January 2021, and chaired by Ambassador Manuel Bessler, the INSARAG Global Chair and Deputy Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Head of the Humanitarian Aid Department and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit. The meeting was facilitated by Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, the Chief of the Emergency Response Section, UN OCHA and INSARAG Secretary. The meeting was attended by 51 participants, and the list can be found in [Annex A](#).

During the meeting, the participants had the opportunity to review the achievements made in 2020 and to discuss the 2021 workplans of the regions and WG. To ensure INSARAG adapts and remains fit for purpose in a pandemic, the recommendations on 13 sub-points within three broad categories (Preparedness and Response, Maintaining Quality Standards and Ongoing Systems Review) arising from the Mid-Year Call and the After-Action Review on the Beirut response on 4 August 2020, and the developments in the last seven months, were presented for consultation. The agenda for the call can be found in [Annex B](#) and the PowerPoint presentation in [Annex C](#).

Session 1: Opening and Updates from the Global Chair and Secretary

On Wednesday 27 January, the New Year Teleconference was opened by Ambassador Manuel Bessler who welcomed all participants. He thanked the outgoing troika members of 2020 – Colombia, Australia and Italy – and welcomed South Korea as the incoming Chair in the Asia Pacific and Argentina as the Second Vice Chair in the Americas regional group. For the AEME region, the in-coming chair is yet to be confirmed (*Afternote: AFAD of Turkey confirmed in March 2021, that they welcome the opportunity to take on the AEME Regional Chair responsibilities for 2022*). The Global Chair reiterated the importance of (1) localization, (2) national accreditation process and (3) ensuring the Network's operational, effective and flexible response during the pandemic. He highlighted the launch of the INSARAG Guidelines 2020 and the extension of the classification validity of INSARAG teams for a two-year period due to the postponement of exercises considering pandemic travel restrictions. He emphasized that while these challenges are common to all member countries, that the network seek out opportunities to continue our work of saving lives – he highly commended the frontline work of all INSARAG USAR teams supporting national COVID-19 response efforts as one notable example.

Sebastian Rhodes Stampa outlined the three key achievements of the network in 2020, as follows: (1) the Network's support to national tailored frontline COVID-19 response plans, (2) the quick and effective response to the Beirut port explosions in a very complex operational environment and (3) the discipline to support the work of INSARAG and uphold its quality standards despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic. For a summary of the INSARAG Year in Review, please refer to the INSARAG Annual Snapshot 2020 in [Annex D](#).

The INSARAG Year in Review 2020 video highlighting key INSARAG accomplishments in 2020 was displayed. The video is available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1Mz5D0uezs>

Session 2: Regional Updates

Regional Chairs shared their respective regional updates and achievements of 2020 and key points from their 2021 workplan.

i. The Americas, Chair - Peru

Mr. Alfredo Enrique Murgueytio Espinoza, Head of the National Institute of Civil Defence (INDECI) and Regional Chair of the Americas Region from Peru, noted that the progress made in 2020 was only possible thanks to the strong commitment of the troika members and the countries in the region. Some of the key achievements include the translation of the INSARAG's Guidelines 2020 into Spanish and Portuguese; and webinars organized in coordination with the Emergency Medical Teams on COVID-19. Mr. Espinoza indicated that more countries and experts were able to participate in regional meetings, due to the virtual format adopted.

The regional plan for 2021, is aligned with the global INSARAG strategy for 2021-2026 and includes activities such as: dissemination of the INSARAG 2020 Guidelines through a workshop in June 2021; training courses for instructors of the USAR coordination course (UCC) and further organization of the UCC course at the national level; organization of a virtual roundtable discussion on flexible response to be followed by the development of the INSARAG Americas technical paper on flexible response; promotion and development of partnerships through strengthening relationship with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and other partners such as the Coordination Center for Disaster Prevention in Central America and the Dominican Republic (CEPRENAC), and the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Response (CAPRADE).

ii. Africa, Europe and Middle East (AEME), Co-Chairs - Poland and South Africa

Mr. Michal Langner, Deputy Head of Operational Department of the State Fire Service of Poland and as the new Polish Policy Focal Point, on behalf of the general Andrzej Bartkowiak, the Co-Chair of AEME region- specifically focussed on the Global Meeting, presented the 2020 achievements. He highlighted that the AEME region remained active despite the challenges posed by the pandemic-related challenges.

Furthermore, due to travel restrictions, the INSARAG Global Meeting (IGM), initially planned for October 2020, is now postponed to October 2021, should pandemic travel restrictions allow for a physical meeting. One of the main activities in 2020 was the discussion on flexible response. Poland proposed for continued discussions of flexible response and to focus this in the context of 'Beyond the Rubble' operations.

On behalf of Dr. Mmaphaka Tau, the Head of South Africa's National Disaster Management Centre, the AEME Co-Chair, and leading the 2021 Workplan for the region, together with Senior Manager, Mr. Musiwalo Moses Khangale presented the workplan for 2021 for the AEME region. Mr. Khangale expressed their readiness to work closely with the Secretariat in finalizing the calendar of activities in the region. He highlighted that the calendar must be realistic and flexible to implement the activities planned for in 2021, and reiterated the focus leading towards the IGM in October. He appreciated that Regional Chairs are included in the discussions on the 2021 calendar and the IEC/IERs schedule.

High on the agenda is the INSARAG Global Meeting 2021, and the INSARAG Secretariat is expected to finalize the draft agenda with Poland and share this at the ISG in May. In relation to the ongoing systems review, Mr. Khangale noted that it is crucial to include countries which

have not been active thus far, in the WGs. South Africa, as a Regional Chair opined that for WG membership, if the Chair/member resigns/retires, other network members should be given the opportunity to be considered and ensure global inclusivity.

Finally, Mr. Khangale, affirmed his support to the endorsement of the Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and to extend continued discussions on flexible response within the region.

iii. Asia Pacific (AP), - Singapore (outgoing Chair) and Indonesia

Mr. Anwar Abdullah, Deputy Commissioner of the Singapore Civil Defence Force, reported on behalf of the outgoing AP Regional Chair, Mr. Eric Yap. The Region's Strategic Objectives in 2020 were: Enhancement of multi-level capacity building and protection in humanitarian responses; strengthening effective national and regional response during a disaster; and strengthening engagement with partners in disaster planning and management.

He highlighted that the key AP activities in 2020 (after the Mid-Year Call in June) included: informal Troika meetings with Sri Lanka's SAR Team; 1st SAR Cluster Webinar; SAR Operations during COVID-19; INSARAG AP Regional Meeting 2020; participation of Singapore as AP Regional Chair in the AEME and Americas Regional meetings and cross fertilize ideas. The Senior Executive Programme in Disaster Management Webinar covered an introduction to the INSARAG Guidelines 2020; and the AP Chair supported the Guidelines Launch on 1 December 2020.

Mr. Moh. Barokna Haulah, on behalf of the National Search and Rescue Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (BASARNAS), current Regional Chair, provided an update on the workplan 2021 for Asia Pacific, which includes: strengthening national and regional response through the National Accreditation Process (NAP) and developing INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) framework in the AP region; Regional trainings (support AP region's training needs, e.g., UC course, classifiers training, Guidelines & ICMS training); and the continuation of virtual webinars/meetings and trainings will continue. Some of the upcoming events for the AP region are the virtual ICMS training; UC course planned in Malaysia and South Korea; IRNAP Road Map seminar and exercise; and the AP Regional meeting.

Session 3: Updates from Technical Working Groups Chairs/Co-Chairs

WG Chairs/Co-chairs updated on key activities (achievements 2020 and workplan 2021):

i. (a) Guidelines Review Group (GRG)

Mr. David Sochor thanked all the regions and particularly the Co-Chair of GRG, Mr. Anwar Abdullah for their involvement and support. Mr. Abdullah presented three major achievements for the WG in 2020. Firstly, the successful launch of the Guidelines on 1 December 2020 which came into force as of 1 January 2021. Secondly, the Guidelines upload on the INSARAG website and app for iOS and Android devices; printed copies are also available from the INSARAG Secretariat in Geneva and in OCHA's Regional Office in Bangkok. Translation in all regions into other languages are ongoing and countries considering doing so can contact the Secretariat directly. Thirdly, the Transitional Guideline Review Group (T-GRG) has been formed for 2021- 2023 under the Co-Chairmanship of Martin Evers from the Netherlands and David Lewis from Australia.

(b) Transitional Guidelines Review Group (T-GRG)

Martin Evers explained that one of the main responsibilities of T-GRG will be to support and advise INSARAG member states, member NGOs, INSARAG Regions and WG in the dissemination and implementation of the revised INSARAG Guidelines. They will strongly focus on providing clarity on the guidelines when required, collate feedback and new proposals, and work on the development of a workplan. The T-GRG will ensure seamless transition of their ongoing work to the next GRG in 2023- for the work of the next review on the INSARAG Guidelines Version 2025.

The Secretariat reported that the forms supporting operations are drafted following the TL meeting in Chile by the IMWG. The Secretariat further highlighted the successful virtual launch of the Guidelines and encouraged all regions to translate the guidelines into their national languages.

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

Annika Coll the Co-Chair from Spain, noted that the group has been meeting every two weeks, (six global WG meetings in total), working on tasks in divided sub-groups (due to different time-zones) whenever possible. The group accomplished the review of classifier roster members based on the guidelines. The team will study the recommendations of the IEC/R system wide review recommendations matrix. In 2021, the WG is planning to continue working on 11 identified recommendations of the matrix and giving priority to those that can be forwarded to other WGs for further development. Finally, the WG is planning to study and propose an implementation plan for extended classification events.

iii. Information Management Working Group (IMWG)

Peter Wolff the Co-Chair from THW Germany noted that the effectiveness of the ICMS system was demonstrated in the Beirut response, where it was successfully operationalized. IMWG started in 2021 with the first basic ICMS training with 300 participants. There are three more trainings planned. The training in AP region will be held on 19 and 24 February and for Americas the training will be organized on 17 March and with simultaneous Spanish translation. The IMWG will continue developing the ICMS system and how best this can be extended to national and NGO USAR teams and other humanitarian networks can benefit from the platform.

iv. Light Team Working Group (LTWG)

Brad Commens the Co-Chair from Australia, reported that the INSARAG Guidelines and checklist were updated and approved, including the ones required for the Light USAR team's classification. Due to the pandemic, the first IEC of a Light USAR team was postponed to November 2021. Nevertheless, the team continues to persevere on by continuous trainings and regular teleconferences with their mentor, Annika Coll.

The first light IEC for @Fire Germany is undergoing consultations and closely monitoring if the global situation will allow the IEC to take place.

The Secretariat announced that the LTWG have unanimously elected Brad Comments of Australia, and Rob Davis from SARAID the former Deputy WG Chair, as Co-Chairs. The Secretariat also reported that following Arjan Stam's retirement, the LTWG agreed that he

continue to be part of the WG as an “Associate Member” as his experience will be tapped in an advisory capacity to the LTWG until the first Light IEC (@Fire) planned in Geneva in November 2021.

v. Medical Working Group (MWG)

Dr. Anthony Macintyre was called for a medical emergency and sends his regrets. The MWG continues to discuss and review medical aspects of the guidelines and USAR response. *(Afternote: The MWG has just completed the draft of the “Covid-19 USAR Response Guidance Note” -This will be shared with the INSARAG and WHO EMT networks.)*

vi. National Accreditation Working Group (NAWG)

Sebastian Mocarquer the Co-Chair from Chile, reported that the NAWG started its work in 2020 and so far, has not met in-person. Nevertheless, it went straight to work in analysing the National Accreditation Process (NAP). The global survey was conducted in November 2020 collecting answers from 50 member states. Nearly 20 member states expressed their interest to start NAP within the next three years. For the upcoming years NAWG has three lines of work: to obtain IRNAP Technical Guidance Note; to update IRNAP Checklist and related documents; and to develop IRNAP Training. Mr. Mocarquer concluded that NAWG is always available for consultations with interested member countries remotely.

The Secretariat reported that the key implementation challenge now, is the postponement of a physical training of the regional Technical Support Group (TSG)/ Technical Review Group (TRG) cadre. Furthermore, the physical conduct of a NAP accreditation process will take place only when it is safe to do so.

vii. Training Working Group (TWG)

Dewey Perks the Chair, from the United States, reported that the TWG meets virtually every month. The main challenges that the TWG has been facing since 2020 is time management and lack of face-to-face interaction. The TWG has been working on several activities including UC Training; Leadership Training; ERE Review; 1st Responders Course review.

A sub-working group was formed to work specifically on the UC Manual Revision and its first meeting was held on 12 January 2021. The sub-working group is comprised of members of TWG and IMWG who are focusing on bringing together the seamless integration and compatibility of the OSOCC Guidelines, UNDAC methodology and INSARAG methodology. The plan is to do cross-checks and ensure the harmonisation of these network methodologies for effective response.

Ambassador Bessler and the Secretary, on behalf of the INSARAG Network, commended on the leadership of all the WG Chairs and Co-Chairs and the dedication of all its members and their sponsoring agencies.

The Secretariat expressed gratitude to the Technical WG experts for ensuring that the INSARAG guidelines and methodology are always up to date and incorporate good practices to be fit for purpose. Additional Information on the INSARAG WGs is available at:

<https://www.insarag.org/global-structures/working-group>

Session 4: Decisions on issues arising from the Mid-Year Call and AAR Beirut

Ambassador Manuel Bessler, supported by Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, led discussions covering the following three broad topics with 13 sub-points arising from the Mid-Year Teleconference in June and the developments around these points over the last seven months:

Topic 1: Preparedness and Response

1.a. International deployment

The response to the Beirut port explosion showed that international teams can and will respond bilaterally despite COVID-19 risks and restrictions. It has been noted that while the flexibility of teams was highly appreciated, they continue to be strongly encouraged to update their availability status on Virtual OSOCC.

Recommendation: Regional Focal Points will work with their regional teams to ensure that teams deployability status is updated.

1.b. Remote Support

Regions continue to explore ways of engaging with disaster-prone countries by actively engaging in online events that INSARAG Regional Chairs and WGs are organizing.

Recommendation: Regions and WGs are encouraged to continue leveraging on virtual platforms, sharing knowledge on good practices and reaching out to their regional and global network members.

1.c. First Responders Program (FRP) -v2.0

Led by TWG and THW, the FRP v2.0 will provide more clarity on how countries can adopt the Package, on who can issue INSARAG certificates with logo upon completion, and on general guidance on how to strengthen the operational readiness of local first responders. Peter Goxharaj highlighted the importance of the FRP as it is related to community-based resilience building.

Recommendation: The TWG and THW's Peter Goxharaj will share further progress on this initiative at the ISG, including the virtual FRP for Iraq in February. The draft is to be shared for feedback in advance of the launch at the IGM 2021.

1.d. Flexible response

Regional Chairs agreed on taking forward the flexible response concept among the three regions, with a caveat from AEME region which does not recommend the network rush this and requested that wider In-depth consultations take place. The Summary of the Regional Positions is in [Annex E](#).

Recommendation: Regional specificities on flexible response to be acknowledged and holistically harmonised into a common position for the INSARAG network. The meeting agreed to direct this task to a specific "Flexible Response WG" to facilitate discussions and present a global position on flexible response at the IGM in October.

The Regional Chairs agreed that the Secretariat will draw up a draft ToR and invite Regional Chairs for their views and subsequently invite global participation in this new WG. Nominations for suitable Co-Chairs from the Regions are welcome and can be shared with the Secretariat for consideration.

Topic 2: Maintaining Quality

2.a. New Calendar and IEC/R Roster and Plans

- i) The new INSARAG Calendar v Jan 2021 and
- ii) New IEC/R dates for 2021-22, and a flexible regional IEC/R Cadre Roster

The Secretariat with inputs from the network will continue to update the INSARAG calendar monthly and will share the updated version during the first week of every month.

The INSARAG Secretary informed the group that all 12 IEC/Rs from 2020 have been postponed to 2021-2022 and that teams have welcomed the two-years extension. IECs remain the priority while IERs that are inadvertently postponed for a second time i.e., from 2021, will be **put on hold** until the situation improves.

Recommendation: A three-month go-no-go timeline* to be introduced in the planning for IEC/Rs from 2021 or until it is safe to conduct physical IEC/Rs. A roster of suitable regional classifiers recommended by the IEC/R Review WG will be engaged.

To augment this pool, a call for a larger pool of regional classifiers will take place in the first quarter of 2021. The process includes considering classifiers from countries with existing travel bubbles and green lane arrangements and who can be available three months prior to the IEC/R date. Host countries and teams will facilitate their full entry requirements and arrange for exceptional quarantine waivers.

****The 3-month Timeline towards an IEC/R in 2021:***

Three months before: Go/no Go by the IEC/R Team mentor, and confirmation of the Exercise by the Operations Focal Point.

The Secretariat will start to confirm the IER cadre and mobilize classifiers from the regional pool following travel advisories from the host country.

Two months before:

IEC/R cadre team should be formed, however if Secretariat is unable to form a team, a NO GO will be announced.

If a GO is given, the Secretariat will next organize a conference call to discuss the PoE and Exercise plans, and travel advisories. The Country Ops and Team Focal Points, the INSARAG Secretariat and Regional Focal Point, IER TL/Deputy, Mentor to participate in the discussions.

One month before:

The Secretariat consults with both the Country Focal Points, Mentor and IEC/R TL, and organizes a final teleconference call, and to consider new developments to the travel advisories affecting the IEC/R classifiers.

Actual Ex:

If there will be no new changes to travel restrictions, then the IEC/R proceeds as planned.

2.b. Remote events – Policy (Regional Meetings) and Technical Meetings led by WGs

INSARAG continues to leverage on technologies for effective remote engagements. From June to September, a total of seven remote technical meetings, six training events, and three regional meetings have taken place. Virtual events will continue during the first half of 2021. The Secretariat is looking at several remote exercises management system platforms and testing them to see whether they can be used to support response exercises.

Recommendation: The Regional and WGs and the Secretariat will share updates on the new technologies and relevant applications and virtual tools to support INSARAG meetings, trainings, and exercises at the ISG.

2.c. IGM in Oct 21 and Warsaw Declaration (WD)

Michal Langner, representing Poland, commented on the timeline of the Global Meeting in Warsaw and confirmed their willingness to organize a face-to-face meeting in October. Although Poland continues the preparations for the Global meeting, a final decision whether the event will be held in-person or not will be taken **in late April**. After this date, other ways to organize the meeting could be considered, such as hybrid or virtual. The IGM Timeline is in [Annex F](#).

To promote and give more visibility to the network and partners' work leading up to the Global Meeting, INSARAG will gather content, such as photos and stories, to be shared in OCHA's official Instagram account, in addition to INSARAG's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

To mark INSARAG's thirtieth anniversary, and with the photos and stories from our network members, OCHA has created a story to look back on some of INSARAG's key milestones and achievements. The story can be accessed at: <https://unocha.exposure.co/insarag>

Recommendation: The Warsaw Declaration (see [Annex G](#)) is shared for a final round of feedback by member countries and – the final draft will be tabled at the ISG in May.

The Network is invited and encouraged to share relevant INSARAG content (photos, stories, etc.) with the Secretariat which could be posted on OCHA's and INSARAG's social media accounts.

2.d *NEW ITEM 1: Issues arising from AAR Beirut Port Response

Sebastian Rhodes Stampa informed participants that the Secretariat has grouped the recommendations arising from the AAR Beirut port response, and will share them with ERS Units, WG Chairs and network partners for their support with the implementation. These recommendations can be found at the INSARAG Technical Beirut AAR Report in [Annex H](#).

In addition, the INSARAG Secretary also referred to two pertinent issues for discussion:

(i) Strengthening of the Damage Assessment and Coordination Centre (DACC) initiative

There is a need for further development of the DACC initiative as part of INSARAG's Beyond the Rubble (BtR) operations. It is key to support affected governments in the assessments of the integrity of buildings and structural damages as a result of earthquakes, with the assistance of qualified structural engineers from the INSARAG teams. The DACC was first established in the Albania earthquake in 2019, jointly with UNDAC, and then again operationalized in Beirut in 2020.

***Recommendation:* The Regional Chairs agreed that the DACC concept come under the BtR issues, and this can be discussed and further developed within the Flexible Response WG-FRWG, following point 1d). The ToRs of the FRWG will be expanded to include this item.**

(ii) Maintaining quality standards and discipline within the system

There is a need to clarify a long-standing issue requiring INSARAG's position related to teams that do not respond at the level classified, respond after the closure of need for more international teams, whose conduct in the field is questionable, or do not answer to the call for international assistance.

There is an ongoing case related to an INSARAG classified team which will be analyzed by a geographically diverse ad-hoc expert group¹, with the support of the Regional Chairs. Relevant updates will be shared at the ISG.

***Recommendation:* Pending the outcome of this enquiry, the ISG in May will discuss how the network can better deal with future incidents.**

2.e *NEW ITEM 2: UNESCO drafted Field Guidelines for USAR Teams responding to Heritage Sites

Following the ISG in 2019, UNESCO's Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit and their first response partners, have shared a draft operational guidance document for INSARAG Teams deploying to sites where cultural heritage has been affected (please refer to [Annex I](#)). Consulted WGs agree that lifesaving is INSARAG's *raison d'être*, but the preservation of historical and culturally valuable sites is also important for the affected people; however, this can be further dealt within the "Beyond the Rubble (BtR) Phase."

***Recommendation:* The Regional Chairs agree with the WG Chairs that this is an important aspect in our response to disasters involving heritage sites and comes under the BtR phase of the USAR response.**

The Regional Chairs agreed that the Flexible Response WG (point 1d) will expand their ToRs to include DACC (point 2d) and to look into INSARAG's role in supporting cultural

¹ Based on Volume II of the Guidelines: Preparedness and Response, Manual C: INSARAG External Classification and Reclassification, item 2.6. stating: 'The ISG may elect to establish an ad hoc Team of experts to review the incident and recommend an appropriate course of action'.

heritage preservation. The Secretariat will facilitate the linkage of the FRWG with UNESCO on the next steps towards a more generic technical guidance note for USAR teams, using the UNESCO draft guidance as a reference.

2.f *NEW ITEM 3: IER in EU MODEX Guidelines Working Group update

Sebastian Rhodes Stampa noted that, in recent years, INSARAG Teams in the EU have enormously benefitted from running their IERs in the framework of the EU MODEX Exercises, in accordance with the expected INSARAG standards. He also informed that colleagues from the EU and team leaders/mentors of teams who had IERs at the EU MODEX as well as WG representatives are now working to develop guidelines for a broader group of stakeholders to ensure that participants in the multi-stakeholder response exercise understand their roles and expectations in the planning for, and during the MODEX. Existing INSARAG IEC/R Team Leaders, Mentors and Classifiers from the EU are part of this WG.

Martin Evers, T-GRG Co-Chair and MODEX WG member, informed that EU colleagues are working on a draft version, which will be completed by mid-February and presented at the ISG in May. The document is very comprehensive, stating tasks and responsibilities when IER is combined with MODEX, including sectors for European teams.

Recommendation: The draft INSARAG IER in an EU MODEX Guidelines will be circulated to the Regional and WG Chairs for feedback in March 2021. The final draft guidelines are planned to be tabled for endorsement at the ISG in May.

Topic 3: Ongoing Systems Review

3.a. ERE V2.0

The Secretariat updated on the completed actions to date and the steps to finalize the ERE version 2.0. It was highlighted that extensive consultations with a broad spectrum of stakeholders took place in 2020 and that a draft version of ERE 2.0 has been already circulated for an internal review. An opportunity to test and fine tune the revised version could not happen in the AP in 2020 and will be tried out at the next face-to-face ERE, when this is safe to do so.

Recommendation: The final draft ERE v 2.0 will be shared in March 2021 and is planned to be tabled for endorsement at the ISG in May.

3.b. WG Governance Survey

The INSARAG Secretariat expressed thanks to the Regional, WG Chairs and members who had participated in the survey conducted in 2019 and highlighted two key recommendations that arose from the responses. The following recommendations are important to ensure geographical balance, variety of views and experience exchange within the group:

- (1) The principle of the Co-Chair system, which was well received and implemented by almost all WGs.
- (2) The periodic two-year rotation of the members, which ensures the arrival of new members, as well as the rotation of chair and co-chair.

It was referred to the assumption that the “seat” in a WG belongs exclusively to a country when the member retires or moves to another position and it was indicated that discussions are needed whether this practice should continue or if the seat should remain opened for other countries to apply and to propose new members. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa proposed that the seat for any member should not necessarily belong to any country and that there is a need for an equitable approach in the system. There must be continuity and sustainability on the handover of chairmanships however, as the organization expands, new members must have the opportunity to share their experience and contextual knowledge with WGs.

Decision: The Regional Chairs agreed that seats in INSARAG WGs do not belong to a particular country. However, there must be diversity and balance of members across gender and involve all three regional groups. The Secretariat will consult with the Regional Chair and the WG Chair in question, on the replacement of future members (from their region) to take the place of the outgoing member who vacates their seat in any WG.

3.c. INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 - for Endorsement

Ambassador Manuel Bessler introduced the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and stressed on its four key strategic objectives: (1) Quality Standards, (2) Localization, (3) Flexible Response and (4) Partnerships, which will guide the INSARAG network for the next five years.

Decision: The Regional and WG Chairs unanimously endorsed the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 ([Annex J](#), Spanish Version in [Annex J.2](#)). The Global Chair encouraged the Regions and WGs to be guided by the INSARAG Strategic Plan for the next five years.

Session 5: AOB, Closing and Announcement of Key dates 2021

The INSARAG Secretary thanked all participants for their contributions and active engagement and encouraged members to pencil down the upcoming key dates of 2021:

- 7 April: HNPW and ISG Preparatory Call
- 19 April-7 May: HNPW
- 4 May: ISG 2021
- Jul-Aug 2021: Mid-Year Call and Pre-IGM Update
- 3-8 October: IGM

Ambassador Bessler thanked Sebastian Rhodes Stampa and the Secretariat team in OCHA Geneva for their tireless dedication to follow up on the issues, and all participants who joined the meeting despite the time differences and accentuated the importance of the call to keep INSARAG’s work moving onward.

Annexes

Annex A	NYT Participants
Annex B	NYT Agenda
Annex C	NYT presentation in PDF
Annex D	INSARAG Annual Snapshot 2020
Annex E	Summary of regional positions on Flexible Response
Annex F	IGM Timeline
Annex G	Warsaw Declaration 2021
Annex H	INSARAG Technical Beirut AAR Report
Annex I	Draft UNESCO Guidelines on USAR and Cultural Heritage Safeguards
Annex J	INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 – Endorsed Version
Annex J.2	Spanish Version - INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 – Endorsed version