

Chairperson’s Summary  
Third INSARAG Global Meeting  
06 October 2021



Co-hosted virtually by the State Fire Service of Poland and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Secretariat, the third INSARAG Global Meeting (IGM) commemorated 30 years of life-saving work by the network. During the meeting, the participants deliberated on new ways of strengthening emergency preparedness through localization and by delivering flexible and high-quality life-saving international assistance. INSARAG's three decades of work were celebrated with the launch of two visual products: the [INSARAG Exposure Story](#) and [This is INSARAG](#). One key outcome was the unanimous endorsement of the [Warsaw Declaration](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)), which reaffirms INSARAG's four Strategic Objectives: (1) Quality Standards, (2) Localization, (3) Flexible Response, and (4) Partnerships, defined in the [INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#), guiding the network for the next five years. The IGM Programme can be found at this [hyperlink](#) and the IGM recording is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Over 350 participants from more than 100 Member States and organizations attended the IGM, including the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador H.E. Zbigniew Czech; the INSARAG Global Chair, Ambassador Manuel Bessler; the Regional Chairs; the Working Group (WG) Chairs; OCHA representatives; Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) practitioners and INSARAG partners and founding members. The list of registered participants can be found [here](#).

The IGM was preceded by four important meetings: (1) The Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting (105 participants), (2) The Africa-Europe-Middle East Regional Meeting (100 participants), (3) The Americas Regional Meeting (83 participants) and (4) The Technical Meeting of Working Groups (WG) and Team Leaders (140 participants). The regional and technical WG meetings provided INSARAG members with the opportunity to discuss regional and WG workplans and their connection to the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and consult on the Warsaw Declaration before its endorsement in the IGM.

A dedicated [web portal](#) was designed to host four interactive platforms: (1) The Virtual Exhibition Area, which had 26 exhibitors and five live sessions showcasing global, regional and local projects, including humanitarian preparedness and response technologies; (2) The Canvas Sheet, which displayed 85 photos, 55 quotes and four videos dedicated to the achievements of the past 30 years of the network; (3) Six Technical Discussion Forums; and (4) The Chat Box, which was used for discussion. Further information on the IGM can be found on the [IGM Portal](#) and the [INSARAG website](#).

## Part I: Opening, Policy, Technical and Operational Achievements

### Session 1: Opening Statements and Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, Chief of the Emergency Response Section and INSARAG Secretary, moderated session 1, during which participants were invited to deliver their opening remarks.

Mr. Pawel Jabłoński, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, paid tribute to the continuous commitment of individuals and Member States who, over the past three decades, have adopted the INSARAG methodology and standards. He outlined that INSARAG is a model for emergency response, with over 90 Member States and organizations enabling flexible USAR response in crises.

Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator stated in a video message that the IGM is a perfect opportunity to celebrate three decades of achievements and deliberate on how to strengthen the network’s preparedness and response capacities.

Ambassador Manuel Bessler underlined the development of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026 and its four core pillars of Quality Standards, Localization, Flexible Response and Partnerships, that will guide the network to be fit for purpose for the next five years. He also stressed that the creation of the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) made USAR response more efficient by establishing verifiable emergency response operational standards.

Brigadier General Andrzej Bartkowiak, Chief Commandant of the State Fire Service of the Republic of Poland and Africa-Europe-Middle East (AEME) Regional Co-Chair highlighted the success of Poland’s long-standing partnership with OCHA and expressed his confidence that the IGM would remind members of the value of their contributions to INSARAG’s work.

### Session 2: Reflections on 30 Years of Regional Achievements

Mr. Winston Chang, INSARAG Unit Head, moderated the session, in which technical experts from the different regions shared key regional achievements in the last 30 years.

#### i. Africa-Europe-Middle East Region

Dr. Moses Khangale, on behalf of the AEME Regional Co-Chair Dr. Mmaphaka Tau, highlighted that the first classified USAR team from Africa came from Morocco in 2014, and that to date, there are 42 classified USAR teams in the AEME Region, 13 of which responded quickly to the Beirut Port explosions in 2020. During the emergency response mission in Beirut, the INSARAG Coordination Management System (ICMS) was operationalized for the first time and the Damage Assessment Coordination Center (DACC) was successfully established to support local capacities. Dr Khangale also underlined the vital role of the National Accreditation Process (NAP) in strengthening quality response,

capacities within national disaster management systems and localization. The region is also advancing partnerships, including with the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), exemplified by the "[Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification \(IER\) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform](#)". He also noted that the response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique and the floods in Albania in 2019 reflected the success of the flexible response. Further information on the AEME Region can be found on the [INSARAG website](#).

## ii. Americas Region

Brigadier General Carlos Manuel Yáñez Lazo, the Americas Regional Chair, noted that in 2005 the Agency for International Development produced the first document for the Americas Region which outlined all the requirements for the establishment of USAR teams. He informed participants that the region has two classified USAR teams from the United States of America, one from Colombia and one from Chile. In terms of localization, Colombia and Guatemala have completed the INSARAG Recognised National Accreditation Process (IRNAP), Panama is currently undergoing the process and Honduras and Chile have requested to begin the process. The Americas Region responded to many earthquakes, including those in Peru, Haiti, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico and advanced national capacities by organizing eight Earthquake Response Exercises (EREs) since 2010. The INSARAG Guidelines were translated into Spanish in 2015 and 2020 and the ICMS was implemented in Argentina, Panama, Peru and Colombia. The region has also strengthened its partnership with the American Association of Firefighters (OBA). Further information about the Americas Region can be found on the [INSARAG website](#).

## iii. Asia-Pacific Region

Air Marshal Henri Alfiandi, the Asia-Pacific (AP) Regional Chair, reflected on the first IEC in 2008 of USAR teams from Singapore and Australia. The region currently has 11 classified teams from nine countries and regularly conducts EREs with local, regional and global actors and partners. The region is disaster-prone, and most notably has responded to earthquakes in Pakistan in 2005, Indonesia in 2009, New Zealand and Japan in 2011 and Nepal in 2015, where the USAR Coordination Cell (UCC) was established for the first time, and more than 70 USAR teams were deployed. The regional NAP WG was established in 2020. Japan hosted the very first IGM in 2010, during which the network adopted the Hyogo Declaration. INSARAG UCC members engaged in assessment and operational missions following the typhoon in the Philippines in 2013, and assisted Emergency Medical Team (EMT) coordination in Nepal in 2015. The AP region is committed to lead the global discussion on flexible response, including by engaging in the Flexible Response Working Group (FRWG). Further information on the Asia-Pacific Region can be found on the [INSARAG website](#).

## Session 3: Reflections on 30 Years of Technical Developments

Mr. Roberto Colangelo, Middle East Regional Focal Point, moderated the session, during which experts shared technical reflections on INSARAG’s key achievements in the past 30 years.

Ms. Annika Coll, INSARAG External Classification/Reclassification (IEC/R) Review WG Co-Chair, discussed the IEC/R process and its evolution over the years. Since 2005, there have been eight classifications per year and currently there are 57 classified teams. While the quality assurance process was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now being restored. The successful IEC of the Far Eastern Regional Search and Rescue Team of EMERCOM of Russia held between 20 and 24 September 2021 was the first IEC held in two years, due to COVID-19. In addition, three USAR teams will undergo the IEC/R process from 20 to 25 November in Geneva.

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer, National Accreditation Working Group (NAWG) Chair, emphasised the importance of national capacity building. He reviewed the network’s milestones in national capacity building, highlighting that in 2020 the NAWG was established and the latest revision of the INSARAG Guidelines included the IRNAP. He informed participants that four countries have now completed the process (Guatemala, Colombia, France and Turkey), which allows INSARAG recognition of the national USAR accreditation processes. The survey conducted in 2020 with over 50 Member States proved that there is a high demand for IRNAP given that six Member States will undergo the process in 2022.

Mr. Paul Baxter, FRWG Co-Chair, stated that the existence of the FRWG proves that INSARAG is ready to adapt to new crises in order to stay relevant. He explained the objectives and structure of the WG and announced that the next co-chair meeting will be held in January 2022. Furthermore, Mr. Baxter reported on the development of the USAR Coordination Manual, which has been created to provide guidance to international USAR teams on the methodology of USAR coordination. The manual also gathers information from previous international responses to disasters and synchronizes the methodology with the On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) Guidelines and the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Handbook.

Further information on the Working Group updates can be found on the [INSARAG website](#).

#### Session 4: Bolstering Partnerships

Ms. Margherita Fanchiotti, Focal Point for Response at the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit, moderated the session, which highlighted some of the key partnerships INSARAG has established over the last three decades.

Mr. Hans Das, Director of DG ECHO, presented the achievements of the partnership between INSARAG and the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, emphasizing that the need for trained, equipped and interoperable USAR teams remains crucial as more sudden-onset disasters are occurring, as seen in Albania in 2019 and Lebanon in 2020. He highlighted that the European Civil Protection Pool brings together emergency response capacities for deployment and includes 15 INSARAG classified teams. Mr. Das also mentioned the publication of the "[Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Reclassification \(IER\) within the EU MODEX Field Exercise Platform](#)", which is a key

example of the close cooperation between DG ECHO and INSARAG and the desire to continuously improve the quality of what we jointly deliver.

Mr. Flavio Salio, Network Lead of the EMT Initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO), underlined that the fruitful collaboration with INSARAG led to the endorsement of the [Joint Statement](#) of the INSARAG Medical Working Group and the WHO EMT on “Field Response During Times of COVID-19” designed to facilitate the response during the pandemic based on the adherence to safety standards. Moreover, he mentioned that the EMT adopted INSARAG methodology for the Classification/Reclassification of the EMT Technical WG. The EMT network also contributed to INSARAG Simulation Exercises through the establishment of the EMT Coordination Cell.

Colonel Martín Cucalón de Ycaza, President of OBA, informed participants that in 2019, OBA remained committed to implementing the INSARAG Guidelines and methodologies in Latin America through organizing virtual training and meetings, such as the 2020 Edition of the OBA Virtual Congress and the Regional advancement of the NAP. OBA also created a technical support group of members to promote, deliberate and enhance INSARAG-related activities.

## Part II: 30th INSARAG Anniversary

### Session 5: Launch of the INSARAG Exposure Story and This is INSARAG

Ms. Haruka Ezaki, INSARAG Focal Point for the AP Region, moderated the session which [launched](#) two visual products: The [INSARAG Exposure Story](#) and [This is INSARAG](#).

Ms. Edem Wosornu, Chief of the Response Support Branch, underlined that INSARAG is an invaluable partner to OCHA, contributing to its mandate and mission. She stressed that operations have become more complex, because of COVID-19, conflicts and the climate crisis, and that the international community must adapt to resolve the challenges ahead. She also emphasised the importance of addressing gender-based violence, as 70 per cent of women experience it in humanitarian contexts compared to 35 per cent worldwide. Ms. Wosornu reaffirmed the fundamental role of the United Nations (UN) in protecting women and ensuring that the four IASC Strategic Priorities are integrated into the relevant national training and regulations.

Ambassador Bessler thanked all those who have contributed to the achievements in the past 30 years and reaffirmed that those efforts are well-represented in the products launched, which are dedicated to all emergency responders and rescue teams who answered the call to save lives when disasters struck.

### Session 6: Endorsement of the Warsaw Declaration

Mr. Martijn Viersma, INSARAG Focal Point for Europe, moderated the session which presented the [introduction](#) and unanimous endorsement of the [Warsaw Declaration](#), also available in [Spanish](#).



Brigadier General Mariusz Feltynowski, Rector Chief Commandant of the Main School of Fire Service and AEME Regional Co-Chair, introduced the Warsaw Declaration and its relevance to the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026. He also affirmed the AEME Region’s support of the Warsaw Declaration.

Brigadier General Carlos Manuel Yáñez Lazo expressed the support of the Americas Region towards the Warsaw Declaration by underlining the importance of strengthening capacity at the national and local level to improve the NAP. Bolstering partnerships and collaborations is also important for the region; the Americas Regional Group are working closely with EMTs, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/OPS), WHO, OBA and other partners in the region, and are looking for further cooperation.

Air Marshal Henri Alfiandi highlighted that the Warsaw Declaration aids a wider understanding of the INSARAG Guidelines and methodology, which are translated into some of the national languages of the AP Region (Chinese, Japanese and Korean). He also noted that the establishment of the AP NAWG to promote the NAP and IRNAP enhances the efficiency of coordination and ensures quality control. The region has also been providing inputs on the concept of Flexible Response and the promotion of the ERE in the region, which began in 2020, recognizing the importance of preparedness and adaptability during the pandemic, through webinars and virtual training.

Ms. Wafaa Saeed, acting Director of OCHA’s Coordination Division, underlined that the UN’s very purpose, namely, bringing people and Member States together to “achieve international cooperation in solving international problems”, is reflected in the Warsaw Declaration. The endorsement of the Warsaw Declaration represents a fundamental step towards providing people in need with stability by reaffirming support to disaster-affected countries in exercising their sovereign role to coordinate international humanitarian assistance in their territories.

Lastly, Ambassador Bessler expressed his gratitude to the regional chairs and OCHA representatives for their support of the Warsaw Declaration and invited all the participants to consider it endorsed.

## Session 7: Statements by INSARAG Founding Members and Pioneers

Ms. Ana Maria Rebaza Delgado, INSARAG Focal Point for the Americas region, moderated the session which invited INSARAG Founding Members and Pioneers to share their memories and experiences throughout their service for INSARAG.

Mr. Ola Almgren, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar and former INSARAG Secretary from 1991 to 1998, noted INSARAG’s key “ingredients”: USAR standards for countries offering and requesting international assistance; a coordination mechanism that could be deployed (the OSOCC); and, lastly, an international body of practitioners that could advance USAR operations. He also acknowledged pioneers, such as Mr. Toni Frisch from Switzerland, Mr. Dietrick Liepke from Germany, Mr. Pete Bradford from

the USA and Mr. Norbert Fürstenhofer from Austria, who have all contributed to the development of the INSARAG methodology.

Colonel Mohamed Al-Ansari, Focal Point and Host of the second IGM, Ministry of Interior, United Arab Emirates (UAE), shared his memories of the first classified team from the UAE to be internationally deployed. He remarked on the crucial role of coordination and sharing of good practices among USAR teams and the essential role of INSARAG in capacity building.

Mr. Dewey Perks, USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, USAR/UNDAC Unit Leader, affirmed that 30 years of life-saving work reflects the enduring strength of INSARAG. He discussed the challenges concerning the adaptation of the Guidelines, the need for the maintenance and progress of the quality standards of the IEC/R, as well as the key role of the FRWG and localization. He conveyed that communication, cooperation, consensus-building and coordination are critical for ensuring INSARAG remains relevant to current challenges.

Ms. Kae Yanagisawa, Former Operational Focal Point of Japan, stated that in the first IGM in Kobe, Japan, the endorsement of the Hyogo Declaration underscored the importance of the capacity building of first responders, the concept of Beyond the Rubble and the role of classified teams. She reminded participants of the trio of disasters - earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima power plant accident - that occurred six months after the first IGM, after which classified teams led a sub-OSOCC in coordination with the UNDAC team. She highlighted this occasion as an example of the flexibility of INSARAG, reinforcing her belief that INSARAG will continue to keep abreast of challenges. She paid tribute to Mr. Kenzo Oshima, former USG for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, reflecting on his long-standing commitment to disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

## Session 8: Closing Remarks

Brigadier General Mariusz Feltynowski thanked participants, emphasized the importance of the theme of the IGM (“Strengthen Quality, Predictability, Speed and Flexibility in Support of National and Local Capacities”) and reflected on the Objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026 as fundamental pillars for the next years of INSARAG’s work.

Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa thanked the Government of the Republic of Poland, and particularly the State Fire Service for co-hosting the event. He expressed his gratitude to the Global, Regional and WG Chairs, pioneer members, partners and teams for their participation in the event and contributions to the IGM Portal.

Ambassador Bessler reiterated his appreciation to the Government of Poland and encouraged the INSARAG community to think of ways to further strengthen national capacities and strengthen preparedness.

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*Drafted by the INSARAG Secretariat with the guidance of the Global and Regional Chairs - October 2021.*