<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERS Network Deployments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea Explosions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Soufrière Volcanic Eruptions – Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Barbados</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-Press Pearl Shipping Accident – Sri Lankan Waters</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana Floods</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti Earthquake</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand-By Partnership Deployments in 2021</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERS Staff Deployments</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDAC Team Leader in Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Planning Support in Haiti</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Team Leader in Haiti</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations Management in Haiti</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Sessions, Workshops, Key Events</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDAC Refresher Courses 2021</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNPW 2021</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAT+</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERSIMEX</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDAC: Sub-working group established between DG ECHO and OCHA</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDAC Induction Course 2021</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMEX Peru 2021</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIP Supporting Implementation of the Regional Floods Alert System</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IERE China (SIMEX China 2021)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC of the EMERCOM of Russia</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSIEME21: IER of Swiss Rescue and PUI, and IEC of @fire Germany</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOC/OSOCC A&amp;A Cell Course</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSARAG Global Meeting</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN/OECD seminar on the 2020 Beirut port explosion</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance Documents 2021</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBI Publication: “Gender, Disaster Management and the Private Sector”</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDAC Mission Monitoring Framework</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEU Updated Disaster Waste Management Guideline</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance for conducting an IER within the EU MODEX Field Exercise</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>platform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Statement issued by the Medical Working Group of INSARAG and</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the EMT Initiative of the WHO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

While the COVID-19 pandemic continued to shape emergency response operations in 2021, OCHA’s Emergency Response Section (ERS) was able to discharge its mandate using both traditional approaches and drawing upon the experience of the previous year to provide a range of services in affected countries.

A United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team supported emergency response operations in Equatorial Guinea after several ammunition explosions in Bata. The Joint Environment Unit (JEU) deployed experts to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados after the eruption of the Soufrière volcano, while the Private Sector Coordinator and Connecting Business initiative (CBI) assisted in publishing a “Business Guide” to the eruption on ReliefWeb. Similarly, the JEU dispatched a team to Sri Lanka after the X-Press Pearl shipping accident to assess the environmental impact of the emergency and provide technical advice in such areas as waste management and sanitation. When accumulated flooding affected many thousands of people in Guyana, an UNDAC team with JEU expertise worked closely with UNEP and OCHA’s Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) on a Detailed Damage Sector Assessment. Throughout the year, Stand-By partner deployments bolstered response operations, particularly in protracted crises and complex emergencies.

The Haiti earthquake response engaged all ERS units on the ground and across online networks. While an UNDAC team worked with the OCHA Haiti Country Office to draft a Flash Appeal and streamline disaster relief efforts, members of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) established a Damage Assessment and Coordination Centre (DACC) to help authorities assess the structural integrity of affected buildings. The Coordination Platforms Unit (CPU) monitored and updated activity on the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (VOSOCC). Partners from various agencies supported OCHA’s efforts to help the affected government by deploying technical experts and supporting key issues such as Accountability to Affected Populations.

Environmental assessment continued to be an integral part of ERS operations in 2021. Each network deployment was joined if not spearheaded by at least one environmental expert, which guaranteed that the environmental impact of the sudden-onset disaster but also the sustainability of the humanitarian response were always taken into account.

In anticipation of pandemic-related disruptions to travel, the ERS ensured that a range of training sessions and conferences could quickly move from in-person to online format. While activities such as the large-scale INSARAG External Classification (IEC) exercise at the Swiss military base in Epesses profited from taking place in person, the possibility of virtual attendance often led to unexpectedly positive results. The 2021 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW), organised by the CPU, took place remotely for the first time and saw an improved gender balance as well as record attendance, with a particular increase from the Global South. During the Haiti earthquake response, operational partners such as MapAction were able to provide virtual assistance to the UNDAC team on the ground.

This report provides an overview of the key activities carried out by the ERS and its member networks in 2021. The deployments which were crucial in the response to sudden-onset emergencies, and particular contributions by staff members throughout the year are highlighted, as are the training sessions, workshops and publications which helped to ensure operational continuity at local, regional and international levels.
ERS Network Deployments

Equatorial Guinea Explosions

On 7 March, a series of ammunition explosions occurred in the city of Bata, Equatorial Guinea, causing extensive damage to houses and residential buildings, and to the newly built hospital. At the request of the Government and the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), an UNDAC team, supported by operational partners, was deployed to support the in-country response, particularly in rapid assessments, the coordination of national and international actors, information management and humanitarian financing.

The three-week UNDAC mission started on 12 March. Four International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) members from Sweden and Finland deployed to Equatorial Guinea with two Information Communication Technology (ICT) base modules, and MapAction provided two staff members to remotely support the UNDAC team and the explosion response operations. The UN Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) provided remote support to the team with a live map of the explosion and satellite imagery of the affected area. The JEU deployed one staff member to lead the UNDAC Team in Equatorial Guinea, and to conduct the environmental assessments.

Multi-sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) results were shared with the UN Country Team (CT) and the government, and a consensus was reached on the number of the targeted population. The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) released US$ 1 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for humanitarian activities. An Emergency Response and Recovery Plan of US$ 10 million, coordinated by UNDAC, was launched to appeal for funding.

La Soufrière Volcanic Eruptions – Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados

On 8 April, following heightened seismic activity at La Soufrière Volcano, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves issued an immediate evacuation order for people living nearby and raised the alert level to red. On 9 April, explosive eruptions with accompanying ash fall began to occur with little to no warning, impacting other Caribbean islands, and in particular Barbados, Saint Lucia and Grenada, and causing displacement of peoples with an activity pattern similar to that of the 1902 eruption.
To support national response efforts and provide specialised environmental assistance, between 21 and 24 April a UN Environment Programme (UNEP)/OCHA Joint Environment team deployed to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados in coordination with the UN RC, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), ROLAC and the Operations and Advocacy Division (OAD). Some of the key environmental issues were air quality, ash management, sanitation issues in shelters, waste generated by ongoing relief efforts and adverse impacts on agriculture, livestock, marine ecosystems and ecotourism.

The teams included seven environmental specialists, one UNEP staff member, one OCHA staff member, two UNDAC members to assist in liaison and team management and three America Support Team (AST) members to assist with logistics. The team in Saint Vincent worked with the UN RC, the Prime Minister and the Director of NEMA, as well as other key stakeholders including the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and scientific institutions active in monitoring and early warning. In Barbados, the team worked in support of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Investment and the Ministry of Environment. Technical advice was provided on volcano and lahar\(^1\) monitoring, toxicologic analysis of ash, ash clean-up and disposal and green response. Findings and recommendations from the mission were delivered to the government and were presented to CDEMA and the Caribbean Development Partners Group (CDPG).

The Private Sector (PS) Advisor, in liaison with the CBi, supported OCHA ROLAC and RCO Barbados in releasing the [Business Guide: La Soufrière volcano eruption in Saint Vincent & the Grenadines](#).

**X-Press Pearl Shipping Accident – Sri Lankan Waters**

In early June, the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl vessel, which had caught fire in Sri Lankan national waters in May, sank to the ocean bed. At the time of the fire, the vessel was carrying a cargo of 1,486 containers, 81 of which were dangerous goods containers, in addition to 322 tons of fuel oil, which raised concerns about actual and potential oil, chemical and plastic contamination.

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\(^1\) A violent type of mudflow or debris flow composed of a slurry of pyroclastic material, rocky debris and water.
In response to a request for international assistance from the Government of Sri Lanka and in coordination with the UN RC, UNEP/OCHA JEU deployed a team of four responders from 16 to 30 June. The team, composed of three experts on oil, chemical and plastic pollution and a UNEP team leader, advised on incident management and assessed the environmental and humanitarian impact of the emergency. On 29 June, the findings and recommendations from the mission were presented to the national authorities, the UN RC and UNCT during a joint debrief meeting. A final technical report was delivered upon mission completion.

Guyana Floods
Over 150,000 people were affected by accumulated floods caused by heavy rainfall in Guyana in May and June. The UN RC requested that OCHA and UNEP participate in a Detailed Damage Sector Assessment with other UN Agencies as part of a larger team led by the sub-regional organization CDEMA and in coordination with the Civil Defense Commission. From 21 June to 4 July, a three-member UNDAC Team, deployed in coordination with the JEU, supported the assessment, with a focus on the functioning of the Emergency Coordination Centers during the response and on environmental impacts linked to the mining sector.

At the end of the mission, the team had a meeting with the UNCT technical team, led by OCHA ROLAC, to analyze how to strengthen their response capacities. It was agreed that a flood contingency planning process would be a good step forward, and ROLAC agreed to follow up with the government.
Haiti Earthquake

A magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck Haiti on 14 August. Over 2,000 deaths and 12,000 injuries were reported, with over 320 people reported missing and over 800,000 people affected. ERS opened a Breaking Emergency page on the VOSOCC and worked closely with emergency networks and with OAD, ROLAC, and the OCHA Head of Office in Haiti.

An UNDAC team was dispatched to Haiti immediately after the earthquake struck, comprising 10 UNDAC members (five OCHA members including JEU, four nationals and one UNDRR member) and eight operational partners (from Atlas Logistique and the Americas Support team). A total of 22 UNDAC members and 11 operational partners were ultimately deployed across two rotations. The team on the ground was supported remotely by OCHA colleagues and operational support partners including MapAction, ACAPS, REACH, UNOSAT, Pacific Disaster Center and iMMAP, which collaborated in the OCHA-led Assessment & Analysis (A&A) Cell. The HQ Core Team Surge also deployed several staff members. Two Humanitarian Affairs Officers and two Information Management Officers, as well as an Accountability to Affected Populations coordinator deployed to support the response operations in Haiti through the SBP.

The UNDAC team worked with the OCHA Haiti Country Office and the NDMA in the Direction Generale de la Protection Civil. An OSOCC was established in Port au Prince with a sub-OSOCC in Les Cayes, and presences in Jeremie and Miragoane. UNDAC assisted OCHA Haiti in revitalizing humanitarian coordination mechanisms, especially at the sub-national level in the affected areas, supporting information management and drafting the Flash Appeal. Rapid environmental assessments were conducted in collaboration with UNEP Haiti. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) was included in the agenda of every meeting and briefing to partners.

An Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Coordination Cell (UCC) was established to coordinate international assistance. A DACC was established to assist the Haitian authorities in assessing the structural integrity of affected buildings.

The CBI supported its member network in Haiti, L’Alliance pour la Gestion des Risques et la Continuité des Activités (AGERCA), in mobilizing the private sector. AGERCA mapped available private sector resources that could be deployed to support the earthquake response, and its members made several donations, including thousands of liters of water, fuel, and NFIs with a value of over US$ 200,000. The ERS supported ROLAC in developing a Business Brief for the response and was a panelist on private sector webinars hosted by the Centre for Disaster Philanthropy and the US Chamber of Commerce to encourage support for the HRP.
Stand-By Partnership Deployments in 2021
The Stand-By Partnership Programme (SBPP) is a key component of OCHA’s surge mechanism, providing timely and expert emergency response capacity worldwide. In 2021, 47 SBP experts deployed to new and escalating humanitarian emergencies and to situations where specific expertise was required and not available within the organization for an average duration of six and a half months. Applying an average P3 monthly salary and associated expenses, these 47 deployments represent an estimated in-kind contribution of US$ 5.6 million to OCHA. SBP experts were sourced from nine partner organizations: CANADEM, DRC, iMMAP, Irish Aid, MSB, NRC, RedR Australia, SDC and ZIF; with the UK FCDO funding approximately 12 per cent of the deployments. Humanitarian Affairs Officers, Civil-Military Coordination Officers and Information Management Officers were the most deployed profiles. The SBPP 2021 report is available here.

ERS Staff Deployments

UNDAC Team Leader in Equatorial Guinea
In March, the ERS deployed a JEU staff member as an UNDAC Team Leader to Equatorial Guinea in response to the explosions which occurred in Bata. Given the limited humanitarian experience of the UNCT, the UN RC decided the full emergency response should be delegated to UNDAC. The JEU staff member led the operations on the ground, working closely with the RC and supported by an experienced team of coordination, assessment and analysis, information management, environmental and logistics experts. The team set up an international coordination structure for the response, led joint needs assessments with other UN agencies and partners, conducted a rapid environmental assessment, promoted information management and coordinated the launch of an appeal. Given the nature of the emergency, the dispatch of JEU expertise in a leadership position was of particular value.

Contingency Planning Support in Haiti
Given the risks associated with the 2021 hurricane season and the potential for civil unrest, in May, humanitarian partners in Haiti decided to draft a contingency plan to deal with the initial phase of a potential emergency. Following this, the Haiti Country Office requested support to lead the contingency
planning process. The ERS responded positively and sent one staff member to Haiti for a five-week mission. The mission focused on the coordination and drafting process and included a workshop and consultations with UNCT members, including government agencies and civil society representatives. The plan was finalized at the end of the mission and focused on three scenarios: a cyclone, displacement and civil unrest. The plan included, among other elements, Standard Operating Procedures for Humanitarian Country Team members, operational plans and minimum preparedness actions per sector. ERS staff also provided ad hoc support in other areas of work during the mission such as in the drafting of sitreps.

Deputy Team Leader in Haiti

In August, the ERS deployed a JEU staff member to be UNDAC Deputy Team Leader and sub-OSOCC Manager in Les Cayes as part of the UNDAC team dispatched to Haiti following the earthquake. The staff member was deployed for the duration of the UNDAC mission, covering both waves of support. Upon arrival in Port-au-Prince and after initial briefings, the staff member travelled to Les Cayes to assess the situation and set up a sub-OSOCC, to support national authorities in localizing response by locally coordinating international assistance. The Deputy Team leader also conducted field humanitarian and environmental assessments and managed information at the department level. Deploying a multilingual ERS staff member across both rotations contributed to the predictability and continuity of operations.
Operations Management in Haiti

In September 2021, the ERS deployed a staff member to Haiti for a three-week UNDAC mission as Operations Manager of the OSOCC in Port-au-Prince. The role entailed coordinating the activities of international response teams and other resources involved in providing relief to the affected population in the following areas: movement of people, goods and fuel, coordination with armed actors and provision of emergency medical care. The staff member also supported negotiations on humanitarian access, bringing together various capacities to better enable the prioritized provision of logistics, security, communications and humanitarian mediation support.

Training Sessions, Workshops, Key Events

UNDAC Refresher Courses 2021

Throughout the year, UNDAC held a total of seven online refresher courses in time zones catering to different regions and in English and Spanish. The aim of the courses was to “refresh” UNDAC members’ knowledge of emergency response methodology and to train participants in OCHA’s key priority areas. To this end, the courses covered topics such as community engagement, PSEA, humanitarian access, private sector engagement, cash and voucher assistance, the environmental dimensions of disasters and coordination. The courses also focused on the soft skills required to work with local, national and regional actors, and finished with an online simulation exercise. Pivoting to online course delivery allowed the ERS to “refresh” up to 140 UNDAC members in 2021.

HNPW 2021

The seventh HNPW was held entirely remotely from 19 April to 7 May. The HNPW, one of the largest humanitarian events of its kind, is a unique opportunity to exchange experiences with participants of diverse backgrounds to collectively identify solutions to the most pressing issues within the humanitarian sector and beyond.

The HNPW 2021 hosted more than 300 sessions organized by over 40 humanitarian networks and partnerships and included an exhibition area with more than 30 stands. The event provided a platform

![On-Site Operations Coordination Centre in Port-au-Prince, Haiti](credit: OCHA)
for networks and partnerships to discuss nine pre-identified Priority Topics (humanitarian coordination and localization, anticipatory action, nexus, accountability to affected populations, climate crisis, integrating security risk management across humanitarian action, emergency response in a pandemic, inclusion and organizational culture and power relations). More than 7000 people from around the world registered for the event, which was 25 per cent more than at the HNPW 2020. There was also a significant increase of participants from all parts of the world, including from the Global South, and for the first time 55 per cent female (compared to 45 per cent male) attendance was observed.

The Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT+) increased significantly in scope in 2021. In January, French and Spanish versions were launched. This original NEAT+, with a focus on rural activities, was renamed the Rural NEAT+ (R-NEAT+). Development of the Urban NEAT+ (U-NEAT+) continued from the previous year. To date, six modules, 70 sub-modules and 784 questions have been created for the U-NEAT+, in comparison to the four modules, 34 sub-modules, and 336 questions in the R-NEAT+. In August 2021, the first of the six U-NEAT+ modules was released in a new online web application on World Humanitarian Day, with requests for pilot testing. The second module, the Shelter module, was released in November. The final U-NEAT+ product is expected to be released in 2022. Training and outreach events continued in 2021, with notable sessions coinciding with the HNPW and the global Food Security Cluster. The U-NEAT+ is accessible at www.neatplus.org.

HNPW 2021: Map of statistics
Credit: OCHA

NEAT+

U-NEAT+ project dashboard
Credit: OCHA/UNEP
ERSIMEX
On 20 and 21 May, the ERS successfully completed a pilot virtual Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ERSIMEX). Building on a simulation exercise previously developed for the UNDAC Refresher course, the ERS ran a section-wide simulation during which 15 UNDAC members, three environmental experts and eight USAR experts worked within their own areas of expertise but also in conjunction with the other participants to jointly address exercise modules. The UNDAC and environmental experts participated in three days of academic training prior to the exercise and the USAR experts also completed pre- and post-deployment training. It was the first time that the Remote Exercise Management System was utilized to allow multiple activities to be synchronized across the participating teams. Although not a substitute for an in-person training event, the exercise provided participants with the opportunity to refresh their skills and become familiar with new emergency response structures and procedures. The ERSIMEX has since run twice, in July and November, and has been expanded to include a full first day and multiple USAR teams and private sector players. To date, approximately 300 attendees have successfully participated in the ERSIMEX series.

UNDAC: Sub-working group established between DG ECHO and OCHA
OCHA and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO)/Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) have agreed to examine how to further institutionalize their relationship on the basis of an updated “Administrative Arrangement to enhance operational cooperation and coordination between DG ECHO and OCHA/ERS”. A working group has been established to identify areas of mutual interest and benefit, and deliverables at both the strategic and the operational level. The arrangement identifies potential areas and modalities for cooperation at headquarters and in the field, where both organizations deploy their teams to the same emergencies.

UNDAC Induction Course 2021
In close collaboration with OCHA’s Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa (ROSEA), the ERS conducted the Africa UNDAC Induction Course from 19 to 30 September in Nairobi, Kenya. The opening and reception were attended by the Chief RSB, the Head of ROSEA and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kenya, the British High Commission and the Swiss Embassy. Participants from OCHA and twelve Member States worked through a flood-based scenario in the first week and in the second week through a three-day earthquake simulation exercise, with the Chief of ERS in attendance. The course ended with an evaluation of the simulation exercise and training and the presentation of course certificates to the newly-inducted UNDAC members. During the training the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC), which hosted the event in Nairobi, maintained strict COVID-19 guidelines that required all participants to stay at the Centre. JEU supported the course with an environmental module, and IHP and MapAction provided infrastructure and technical support. The Swiss and British governments provided funding for this first Induction Course in East Africa.
SIMEX Peru 2021
The virtual Americas Earthquake Response Exercise (SIMEX Peru 2021) was organized by Peru and the INSARAG Secretariat, and took place from 21 to 25 June. Over 700 people participated in the exercise, and the exercise control team included more than 30 national and international experts. The exercise comprised six disaster-response functional groups: the Government (including NEMA, regional and local Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs) and state sectors); national USAR teams (10 teams); international USAR teams (22 teams); the UNDAC system (OSOCC and USAR Coordination Cell); EMTs (25 National EMTs, four International EMTs, the Medical Information and Coordination Cell and the Health Emergency Operations Center); the Humanitarian Country Team and the private sector. The event provided simultaneous interpretation in English and Spanish, and the platform for the exercise was designed and run by the National Institute of Civil Defense (INDECI) of Peru.

JIP Supporting Implementation of the Regional Floods Alert System
In 2021, following consultations within OCHA, it was agreed there should be a shift towards more tangible support and ownership of the Jordan-Israel-Palestine (JIP) Professional Dialogue in the region, bringing decision making closer to partners and needs. An agreement was reached to move the operational and administrative lead to OCHA Jordan, with the ERS maintaining a critical role in donor- and Geneva-based partner liaison, advocacy and resource mobilization. It was also agreed that a Steering Group consisting of OCHA HQs and regionally based colleagues would be constituted to provide strategic management and support.

The implementation of the jointly developed Regional Early Warning System for Floods continued throughout the year with the support of Expertise France.

IERE China (SIMEX China 2021)
The Asia-Pacific regional International Earthquake Response Exercise (ERE) took place online from 24 to 26 November, hosted by PR China. This was the first IERE to take place in the Asia-Pacific Region since the ERE Guide 2.0 was issued in early 2021. The exercise tested the international coordination of EMT, USAR teams, and UNDAC teams (including environmental experts) with a scenario in which a large-scale earthquake occurs in the Sichuan Province of China. The Local Emergency Management Authorities also participated in the event. This ERE was shortened from five to three days to accommodate the remote format, and a one-day pre-simulation exercise workshop was included for USAR participants to review the latest INSARAG guidelines including those related to the INSARAG Information and Coordination Management System (ICMS). Participants and observers from 30 countries and four organizations joined from around the world.
IEC of the EMERCOM of Russia
The first IEC since the COVID-19 pandemic began was held from 20 to 24 September. The Far Eastern Regional Search and Rescue Medium team of the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM) underwent a successful classification in Khabarovsk. 10 classifiers from seven countries, including experts from Belarus, France, Hungary, Jordan, Oman, Poland and the United Kingdom, led by a Norwegian mentor, participated in the classification, which consisted of a full-scale intensive 36-hour field exercise. The Chief of ERS attended the IEC.

Two members of the Far Eastern Regional Search and Rescue Team of EMERCOM of Russia (RUS – 03) working together
Credit: OCHA

INSIEME21: IER of Swiss Rescue and PUI, and IEC of @fire Germany
INSIEME21, the first triple INSARAG External Classification/Reclassification (IEC/R), was held from 22 to 24 November in Geneva. INSIEME21 consisted of two IERs of the Heavy team Swiss Rescue of Switzerland (SUI-01) and the Medium team Pompiers de l’urgence internationale (PUI) of France (FRA-01), and the first IEC of the @fire Light team of Germany (GER-10). Over 30 Classifiers from 23 countries across the globe participated. Observers from Belarus, Jordan, Korea, Qatar, Turkey and the United Kingdom were also present. Since the establishment of the IEC system in 2005, 58 teams have been classified.

INSIEME21: Members of @fire Germany (GER-10) with INSARAG Secretary, INSARAG Global Chair and INSARAG Unit Head
Credit: OCHA
EOC/OSOCC A&A Cell Course
With the support of the Government of Estonia and in collaboration with OCHA’s Needs Assessment and Analysis Section, Field Information Services Section and operational partners, the ERS conducted an EOC/OSOCC A&A Cell Course in Tallinn, Estonia from 29 November to 3 December. The aim of the course was to train UNDAC members, OCHA staff and partners in the A&A Cell concept, methodology and tools for collaboration in sudden-onset emergency response. The 24 participants came from six UNDAC member countries, seven OCHA offices, Atlas Logistique, the European Union Emergency Response Coordination Centre, IFRC, MapAction and REACH. In addition, partners agreed to continue to work together on the development of common methodology, tools and SOPs to be used either jointly or in their programs and training. The Government of Estonia is interested in supporting the course again in 2022.

INSARAG Global Meeting
On 6 October, the third INSARAG Global Meeting (IGM) was virtually co-hosted by the State Fire Service of Poland and the INSARAG Secretariat. The IGM commemorated 30 years of life-saving work by the INSARAG network. Global Meetings are held every five years and bring together all three INSARAG regional groups, pioneers, technical working groups, USAR Team Leaders and partners. The meeting resulted in the unanimous endorsement of the Warsaw Declaration and its four Strategic Objectives: (1) Quality Standards, (2) Localization, (3) Flexible Response, and (4) Partnerships. The strategic objectives are defined in the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026, which will guide the network for the next five years and will assist in improving emergency response in the context of COVID-19, climate change and conflict. Over 350 participants from more than 100 countries and organizations joined the event. INSARAG’s three decades of work were also celebrated with the launch of two visual products: the INSARAG Exposure Story and This is INSARAG.

Lieutenant Colonel Michal Langner, Deputy Director of the National Centre for Rescue Coordination and Civil Protection of the State Fire Service of the Republic of Poland, opening the 3rd INSARAG Global Meeting Credit: State Fire Service of the Republic of Poland
UN/OECD seminar on the 2020 Beirut port explosion
The UN/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) seminar on the 2020 Beirut port explosion was held online on 14 December to discuss lessons learned, experiences and good practices in managing the risks of ammonium nitrate storage, handling and transport in port areas, as well as accident prevention and mitigating accident consequences. The seminar was jointly organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the JEU, the UNDRR Regional Office for Arab States and the OECD, and brought together a range of communities relevant to the seminar topic, namely the chemicals, disaster risk reduction, emergency response, industrial safety, maritime, occupational safety and health and transport communities. The seminar was an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned from the response to the Beirut but also the Bata explosions, both of which were ammonium nitrate-related. The seminar was held online with Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish interpretation.

Guidance Documents 2021
CBi Publication: “Gender, Disaster Management and the Private Sector”
On 9 February, the CBi launched a new publication, “Gender, Disaster Management and the Private Sector” that explores how gender considerations influence private sector disaster management, and how the interlinked actions among gender, disaster management and the private sector can offer win-win solutions that benefit people, business, and the broader society. The document also includes a special chapter on COVID-19; a case study on women-led micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) facing a double disaster in a small island developing state; a case study on opportunities for displaced women leading MSMEs; and a case study on how the digital gender divide influences women’s access to humanitarian assistance. The publication is available online.
UNDAC Mission Monitoring Framework
Following a request from the UNDAC Advisory Board and with the support of a working group and a UK-funded consultant, the ERS developed the UNDAC Mission Monitoring Framework (MMF) in 2021. The MMF provides a “menu” of twelve generic and commonly identified mission objectives with monitoring and evaluation criteria that can guide the ERS and the deployed team from the start to the end of a mission. The ERS and the team can choose from and adapt these objectives to the mission-specific Terms of Reference and Plan of Action. The MMF was first used for the Haiti earthquake response mission and, as part of its design and development, it will be reviewed after future missions. The MMF supports a new and streamlined approach to the monitoring of UNDAC missions’ objectives across the different post-mission phases (team debrief, partner surveys, After Action Reviews and Mission Reports).

JEU Updated Disaster Waste Management Guidelines
Disasters and conflicts can generate huge quantities of waste that threaten public health, hinder reconstruction and impact the environment. Disaster waste includes all waste generated by the actual disaster as well as the response to and recovery from it. Safe handling, removal and management of disaster waste is key to restoring humanitarian access, facilitating the delivery of aid and preventing further impact on human health and the environment. In 2021, the JEU updated its Disaster Waste Management Guidelines in light of the guidance developed for COVID-19 waste management and made its online interface more user-friendly. The guidelines are available online.

Guidance for conducting an IER within the EU MODEX Field Exercise platform
On 4 May 2021, version 1.1 of the “Guidance for conducting an INSARAG External Classification (IER) within the EU Module exercise (MODEX) Field Exercise platform” was endorsed by the INSARAG Steering
Group. The handbook was specifically developed to complement the information contained within the INSARAG Guidelines and EU MODEX documentation. It is addressed to all personnel, organisations and hosting countries involved in the preparation, development and implementation of the IER process when undertaken using the platform of the UCPM EU MODEX. The handbook is available online.

**Joint Statement issued by the Medical Working Group of INSARAG and the EMT Initiative of the WHO**

In May 2021, members of the INSARAG Medical Working Group and World Health Organization (WHO) EMT initiative collaborated to develop a statement regarding field response teams considering international deployment in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Joint Statement is intended for international response teams (EMTs, USAR teams) that prioritize rescuing and supporting impacted populations in disaster-stricken countries. Adherence to these measures can protect the team as well as the affected country and ensure effective mobilization. The Joint Statement was welcomed by the INSARAG Steering Group in May 2021. The document is available online.

**Conclusion**

In 2021, the ERS demonstrated its capacity to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and in doing so shed light on new and diverse ways to respond to sudden-onset emergencies. ERS network members and partners from around the world met the challenges of the year with resourcefulness and professionalism. The ERS expresses its sincere gratitude to its global team for their commitment, now as ever.