Guidance Note on the

INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (IRNAP)

May 2022

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United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

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Abbreviations

BoO	Base of Operations
ERS	Emergency Response Section
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	INSARAG External Classification
IER	INSARAG External Reclassification
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IRNAP	INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process
LEMA	Local Emergency Management Agency
NAP	National Accreditation Process
NAWG	National Accreditation Working Group
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSOCC	On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
TSG	Technical Support Group
TRG	Technical Recognition Group
UCC	USAR Coordination Cell
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
VOSOCC	Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre

1. Introduction

Since 2005, INSARAG has had an external classification process for international USAR teams (IEC process), which establishes verifiable operational standards and is an example of how a peer evaluation mechanism can provide added value in disaster preparedness and response.

With regard to national USAR teams, each member state's authorities have the responsibility of providing guidance and formulating standards and procedures to verify teams' compliance. Since 2015, the INSARAG Guidelines explicitly encourage member states to establish a national accreditation process that is developed, adapted, and framed in the member state's own reality and recommends using the INSARAG Guidelines as reference. In fact, for several years a growing number of member states have been developing their national process using the INSARAG Guidelines as a reference. In addition, the 2020 INSARAG Guidelines encourage the member states to go even a step further by requesting the INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (IRNAP), which certifies that the USAR system in the member state is completely in accordance with the INSARAG Guidelines methodology.

2. Background

Based on the Lessons Learnt from the 2010 Haiti Earthquake and the "Meeting on the INSARAG-proposed Classification Standards of National USAR Teams" in June 2010 in Geneva, 2011, – after a global consultation process - a new chapter G on the establishment of national urban search and rescue capabilities was included in the INSARAG Guidelines. At section G3.5. this version of the Guidelines encouraged member states to "adopt (at the appropriate level) the INSARAG organizational and operational guidelines for capacity building of national USAR teams as a target achievement for its national USAR teams and to adopt appropriate processes for the confirmation of achievement of these standards". This was the beginning of the National Accreditation Process (NAP) as we know it today.

The 2015 INSARAG Guidelines included a complete Manual on strengthening national and local capacity (Vol. II, Manual A), recommending member states to establish an accreditation mechanism for national teams that "*allows a member state to manage, monitor and establish the same standards officially and adhere closely to the INSARAG standards and guidance*". With this step towards a national but more INSARAG orientated process, the path towards the IRNAP was laid.

Consequently, in 2017, the INSARAG Steering Group approved the INSARAG External Support and Recognition proposal (IESRP) for national accreditation processes and encouraged Regional Groups to put it into practice and report on its implementation at the annual meetings of the Steering Group. Due to several changes in the Guidelines revision process, the IESRP was in 2020 replaced by the IRNAP which is now defined in Volume II, Manual A: Capacity Building.
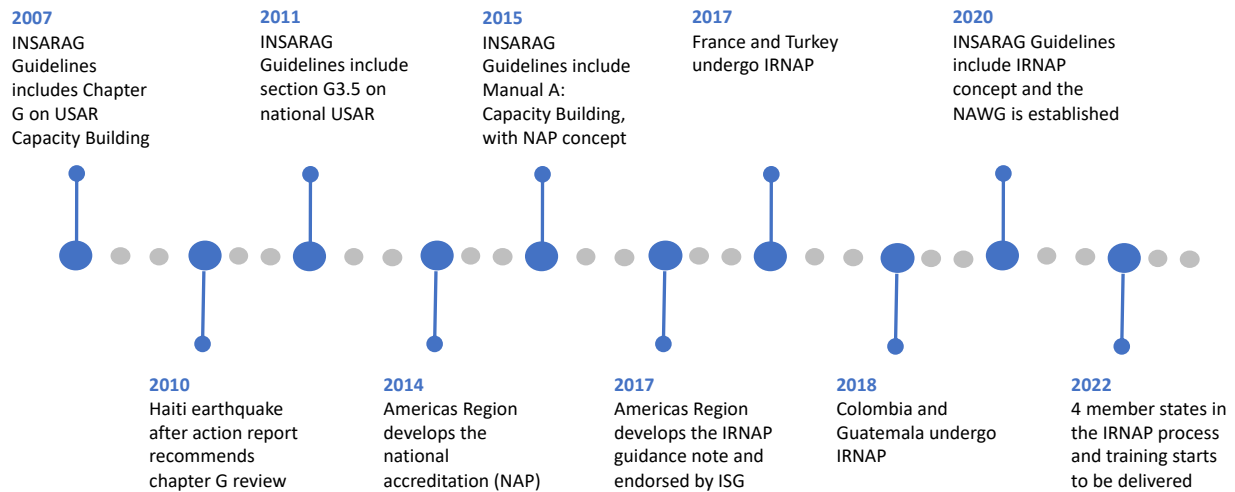
2007
INSARAG Guidelines includes Chapter G on USAR Capacity Building

2011
INSARAG Guidelines include section G3.5 on national USAR

2015
INSARAG Guidelines include Manual A: Capacity Building, with NAP concept

2017
France and Turkey undergo IRNAP

2020
INSARAG Guidelines include IRNAP concept and the NAWG is established

2010
Haiti earthquake after action report recommends chapter G review

2014
Americas Region develops the national accreditation (NAP)

2017
Americas Region develops the IRNAP guidance note and endorsed by ISG

2018
Colombia and Guatemala undergo IRNAP

2022
4 member states in the IRNAP process and training starts to be delivered

FIGURE 1. TIMELINE OF IRNAP DEVELOPMENT

3. National Accreditation Process (NAP)

The INSARAG USAR response framework shows a structure that seeks to ensure interoperability between the different USAR response levels and determines that "*it is vital that working practices, technical language and information are common and shared through all levels of the USAR response framework*" (INSARAG Guidelines, Volume II, 3.1). Therefore, the standards developed for the accreditation of national teams **must be aligned** with the INSARAG methodology and must be recognized within this same framework.

Several key elements of the NAP ensure a smooth and successful implementation, which are shown in Figure 2:
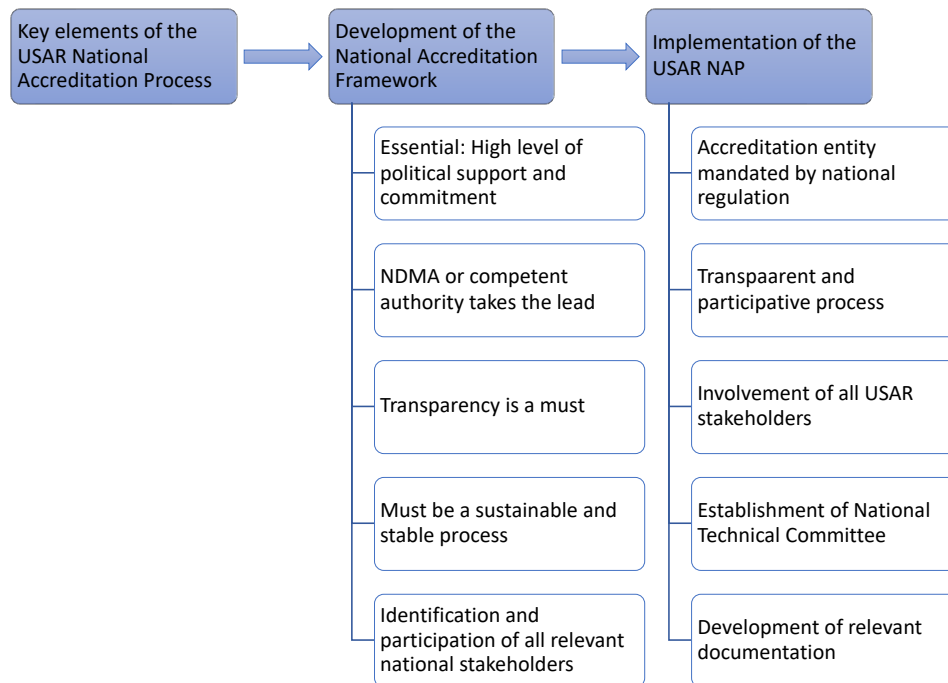
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Key elements of the        Development of the          Implementation of the
USAR National       →      National Accreditation  →   USAR NAP
Accreditation Process      Framework
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Essential: High level of political support and commitment	Accreditation entity mandated by national regulation
NDMA or competent authority takes the lead	Transpaarent and participative process
Transparency is a must	Involvement of all USAR stakeholders
Must be a sustainable and stable process	Establishment of National Technical Committee
Identification and participation of all relevant national stakeholders	Development of relevant documentation

FIGURE 2. KEY ELEMENTS OF **NAP**

It is neither desirable nor feasible for the INSARAG community to take on the responsibility of accrediting or classifying national USAR teams, this being the responsibility of the national authorities as reconfirmed by the INSARAG Guidelines 2020. Therefore, it is important to understand that the NAP itself has an important difference to the IRNAP: NAP isn't an external verification, it is a national one. Also, the IRNAP is not replacing the IEC/R of International USAR Teams; the IRNAP is the external verification of the national USAR System.
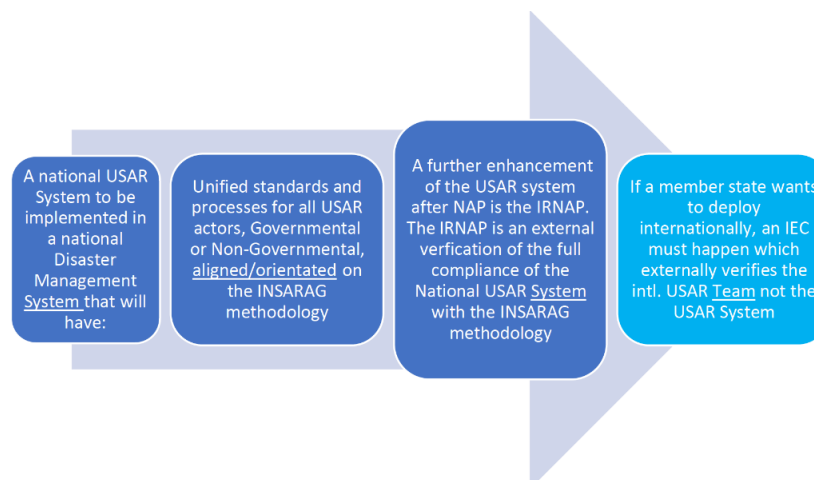
A national USAR System to be implemented in a national Disaster Management System that will have:	Unified standards and processes for all USAR actors, Governmental or Non-Governmental, aligned/orientated on the INSARAG methodology	A further enhancement of the USAR system after NAP is the IRNAP. The IRNAP is an external verfication of the full compliance of the National USAR System with the INSARAG methodology	If a member state wants to deploy internationally, an IEC must happen which externally verifies the intl. USAR Team not the USAR System

FIGURE 3. **NAP/IRNAP** DIFFERENCES.

For this purpose, it is proposed to homogenize the minimum standards for national USAR teams, leaving the necessary space for national adaptation in the compliance with said standards. The suggested formats can be found on the INSARAG website at: https://www.insarag.org/capacity-building/national-guidelines/

4. INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (IRNAP)

The INSARAG support and recognition process of National Accreditation Processes responds to standard terms of reference that will be jointly reviewed by the Secretariat and the requesting member state.

4.1. Objective
Provide a reference framework to support and recognize member states' efforts in the development of national capacity and allow INSARAG recognition of the national USAR accreditation processes.

4.2. Scope
Member states that are developing and/or implementing a national USAR accreditation process in accordance with the INSARAG methodology and standards.

4.3. Roster of Support and Recognition Experts: Technical Support Group and Technical Recognition Group (TSG/TRG)

4.3.1. Profile of TSG/TRG Members

A roster of experts from different member states at the regional level, with the appropriate profile and approved by the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship, has been established for the INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Processes (IRNAP).

The members of the two teams of specialists or experts who will be involved in the process are selected from this Regional Roster, namely the Technical Support Group (TSG) and Technical Recognition Group (TRG), who have the following functions respectively:

- TSG: To support and advise a requesting member state's national USAR system (based on its level of progress) in the design and implementation of the National USAR Accreditation System to comply with the minimum INSARAG guidelines, steps, and standards.
- TRG: To review compliance by the requesting member state's National USAR Accreditation System with the minimum INSARAG guidelines, steps, and standards, and to recommend the INSARAG

External Recognition of the requesting member state's National USAR Accreditation System to the INSARAG Regional Secretariat.

In the IRNAP for a requesting member state, a member of the TSG cannot play a role in the TRG or vice versa. This is to ensure impartiality through an independent peer review process and there is no duplication of roles and functions.

Although both groups are established at the regional level to respond to requests from member states in that region, experts from other INSARAG regions can also participate if they have been approved by the respective Regional Chairmanship. In fact, Regional Groups are encouraged to allow participation from different regions to encourage learning and sharing of experiences and best practices.

The experts must meet the established minimum requirements, such as:

- USAR experience (processes, training, operations, and coordination).
- Experience in response operations and coordination.
- Experience with the INSARAG methodology.
- Experience with a NAP, IRNAP, or IEC/R process (I.e., TSG/TRG Member, IEC/R Classifier. Classified USAR Team Leader).
- Sufficient knowledge of the regional context, relevant languages, and good interpersonal soft skills.

To avoid confusion in the use of terms of Mentor and TSG, explanation of distinction is below:

- Mentor: The main role of the mentor is to "coach" or guide a specific USAR team regarding its preparation and success for its IER/C or within a NAP.
- TSG: The TSG is a group that can be composed by several experts from mainly the regional roster and its main role is to "support and advise" the development of the NAP, including the political adaptation, regulation, and strategies so that they can build the National USAR system and improve its capacity through the National Accreditation Process.

4.3.2. Application and approval

To form the Regional Roster, each INSARAG Regional Chairmanship must make an initial call, with the support of the INSARAG Secretariat. The INSARAG Secretariat initiates a new call through VOSOCC and via e-mail to the focal points of the Regional Group's member states and organizations. TSG/TRG members and members in training (candidates to the TSG/TRG roster) interested in being part of a support or recognition process must upload their application and commitment form, detailing their relevant experience, to their profile in the VOSOCC. The Regional Chairmanship will review the nominated candidates based on the Secretariat's recommendations and the selection criteria and will finalize the approved list of TSG/TRG

members or members in training. It is recommended that the Regional Groups establish two categories of roster experts, namely the members and members in training.

- Members: Experts are part of the TSG/TRG roster. They meet all established minimum requirements and will be approved as "members".

- Members in training: Candidates to the TSG/TRG roster. They may not have enough or specific experience with IRNAP or IEC/R. The INSARAG Regional Chairmanship may propose them to obtain the experience required to be part of the roster. Members in training may participate in the process if the requesting member state accepts it. Their expenses must be covered by the member state or organization they represent.

At least every two years, the Regional Chairmanship, with the support of the INSARAG Secretariat, makes a new call to maintain a TSG/TRG roster of qualified and available experts to support the requesting member states. Each time a new call is made, the category of members in training should also be reviewed by the Regional Chairmanship and INSARAG Secretariat to assess whether they have gained sufficient experience to become "members". Members of the national USAR teams who participated with leading roles in an IRNAP process, could also be incorporated into the TSG/TRG roster.

4.3.3. Roster member preparation process

Candidates wanting to answer the call from the respective Regional Group for support of the TSG/TRG roster will need to apply for membership. Selected members will then be expected to participate in a virtual 4-hour IRNAP Introduction and Awareness Course to be followed by the in-person training course that will train them in the IRNAP methodology and the various tools to be used. In addition, once every two years, the TSG/TRG rostered members will participate in an in-person update training course to ensure continuous education in the IRNAP methodology.

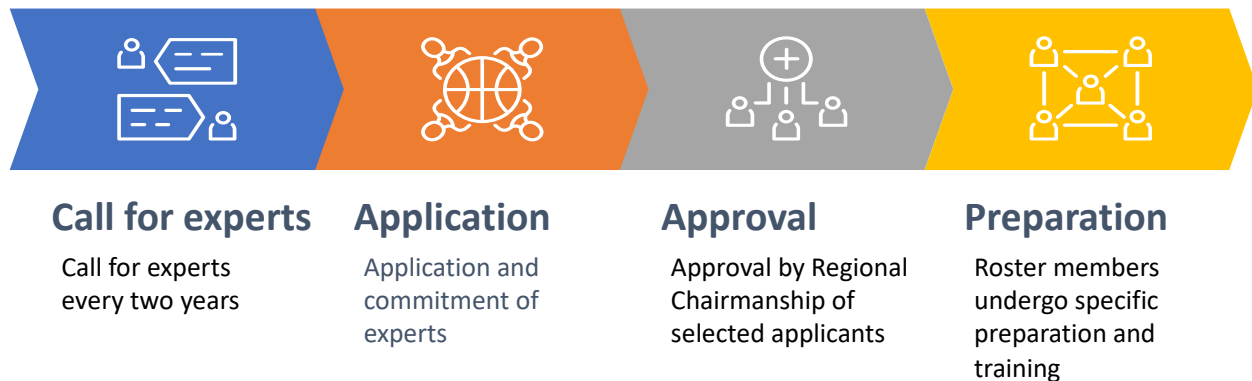Figure 4 shows the process for the formation of the TSG/TRG within each region.

Call for experts
Call for experts every two years

Application
Application and commitment of experts

Approval
Approval by Regional Chairmanship of selected applicants

Preparation
Roster members undergo specific preparation and training

FIGURE 4: TSG/TRG ROSTER FORMATION

4.3.4. Terms of Reference for the TSG and TRG

The objective of the TSG/TRG is to advise and accompany the requesting member state in the design and review of the national accreditation process for USAR teams and verify the compliance with the INSARAG guidelines and methodology.

Specific Objectives / Role & Responsibilities of TSG Members

1. To provide advice and support in the implementation of the National Accreditation Process (NAP) aligned to INSARAG standards, using the relevant INSARAG documentation and standard formats for the national USAR accreditation process.

2. To document and conduct verification of adherence to the relevant INSARAG documentation, steps, and standards.

3. To present progress updates on the Support Phase to the INSARAG Regional Secretariat (and make recommendations on the requesting member state's readiness to enter the Recognition Phase).

4. Verify compliance of the national USAR accreditation process with the USAR national standards checklist, the list of criteria and the stages of the accreditation process. Make recommendations on the requesting member state's readiness to enter the Recognition Phase.

5. To submit a self-assessment of the IRNAP Methodology to the INSARAG Secretariat at the end of the process.

Specific Objectives / Role & Responsibilities of TRG Members

6. To apply the verification tool (checklist), in an objective and non-biased manner, for verifying compliance with INSARAG Guidelines, steps and standards as outlined under the Guidance Note on IRNAP.

7. To acknowledge that the member state's NAP and USAR Teams may use their national standards to achieve the common objectives found in the Guidance Note on IRNAP.

8. To submit a final verification report to the INSARAG Regional Secretariat and recommend recognition based on compliance with INSARAG guidelines, steps and standards as outlined under the Guidance Note on IRNAP.

9. To submit a self-assessment of the IRNAP Methodology to the INSARAG Regional Secretariat at the end of the process.

TSG Considerations

Duration: The process shall not last more than 18 months, with a single extension of up to 6 additional months. There must be a work plan, to be carried out for each of the stages of the process, as well as a schedule for its development, with a clear determination of when the objectives will be achieved, establishing roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process.

Composition: It will be composed of at least one (only for consolidated level) and up to three experts from different countries, mainly of the region, who will be chosen by the requesting member sytate from a regional list of experts, which will be made available by the INSARAG Secretariat. Additionally, up to a maximum of three members in training could be appointed as part of the TSG.

Financing: The requesting member state must cover the costs related to the TSG (except for the members in training) without prejudice to the fact that financing is also achieved through its own resources, bilateral agreements and/or donor support.

TRG Considerations

Duration time: The process will not last more than 3 months. There must be a work plan that will be carried out during the visit to the member state to do the final verification of the process, as well as a final report to the Secretariat, the Regional Chairs, and the TSG/R roster.

Composition: It will be composed of at least two experts from different member states or representatives of the region, who will be chosen by the requesting member state from a regional list of experts, which will be made available by the INSARAG Secretariat. Additionally, up to a maximum of three members in training could be appointed as part of the TSG.

Financing: member states that have obtained recognition must also commit to provide experts for the Regional Roster and fund their participation, including their training process.

4.4. IRNAP Process Commitment Criteria

INSARAG's recognition must comply with the Commitment Criteria indicated below:

- *Voluntary:* Above all, this process must be voluntary and interested member states must make a formal request to obtain support and recognition.
- *Supported by a team of regional specialists:* A group of experts who support and recognize the member states's efforts, such as compliance with the INSARAG methodology and minimum standards.
- *Member states' commitment:* The member states that have obtained recognition must also commit to provide experts for the Regional Roster and fund their participation in the recognition stage if selected to be a member of a TRG, including their training process.
- *Commitment to the* INSARAG *methodology:* The requesting member state must show its willingness to adopt the INSARAG methodology and minimum standards for the development and functioning of their national USAR teams. It's recommended that the member state adopts the INSARAG coordination methodology within the national USAR framework, with special consideration to the interoperability with international USAR teams in case of the request of international assistance.
- *Financed by the requesting member state:* The requesting member state must cover the costs related to the Technical Support Group, which may be done through different modalities, including bilateral agreements and donor support, among others.

NOTE: to avoid confusion, it is very important to clarify that there are two different sets of criteria:

- *__Commitment Criteria__ are those assumed by the IRNAP TSG/TRG and the requesting member state, listed in section 4.4.*
- *__Verification Criteria__ are those that must be evaluated as part of the support and recognition process. These are the seven criteria found in __Annex 02: Checklist of NAP Process Criteria and Stages.__*

4.5. IRNAP Process Levels

The support and recognition process has a series of key stages, including determining the level of the member state. The work methodology and the completion of the stages will depend on the level of progress of the national USAR process and more specifically on the national USAR accreditation process.

Progress can be characterized in three levels:

- **Design level**: A member state that requests support to meet the standards without yet having any existing process.
- **Advanced level**: A member state that declares it partially complies with the methodology's standards and requests support for its full development.
- **Consolidated level**: A member state that declares it complies with all the methodology's standards and requests support for verification.

Hence, the terms of reference for the Technical Support Group will be established according to the identified level, and the duration of the process will vary according to this.

4.6. Initiation of the Support Process

4.6.1. Request

The interested member state must submit an application to the INSARAG Secretariat through a formal document stating its commitment to work according to the INSARAG methodology, presenting an initial self-assessment report of compliance with the INSARAG national guidelines, steps and standards and supporting documentation. The request must be signed by the highest national authority of the member state's risk management system to the INSARAG Secretariat/OCHA, through the INSARAG political focal point and with a copy to the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship Group and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the member state. See annexes:

- Annex 01 – Template for TSG support request and declaration of commitment.
- Annex 02 - Checklist of the National USAR Accreditation Process criteria and stages.
- Checklist of INSARAG national standards available at www.insarag.org.

4.6.2. Designation of the Technical Support Group (TSG)

When the INSARAG Secretariat receives a request from a member state for recognition or support in the design or revision of its national USAR accreditation process, it will send the request to experts within the Regional Roster who will respond with their availability to support the national accreditation process.

Once the deadline for responding to the request has passed, the Secretariat compiles information on the available experts, downloads their profiles and shares this information with the requesting member state. Within two weeks the requesting member state will select the experts available from the regional TSG/TRG roster from different member states. In the case of a member state with a consolidated level NAP it would be enough to select at least 1 expert. In case of a member state with a NAP at design or advanced level it is necessary to select at least 2 experts. Also available is the option to add/accept other appropriate experts and members in training as part of the TSG. When more than one expert is selected for the TSG, a Team Leader should be identified by the INSARAG Secretariat.

The member state communicates its selection to the Secretariat, which in turn informs the entire TSG roster through a message sent via the virtual OSOCC and email. The Secretariat will share with the selected TSG the contact information of the pertinent people from the requesting member state so that they can get in touch and agree on the work modalities (see Figure 5).
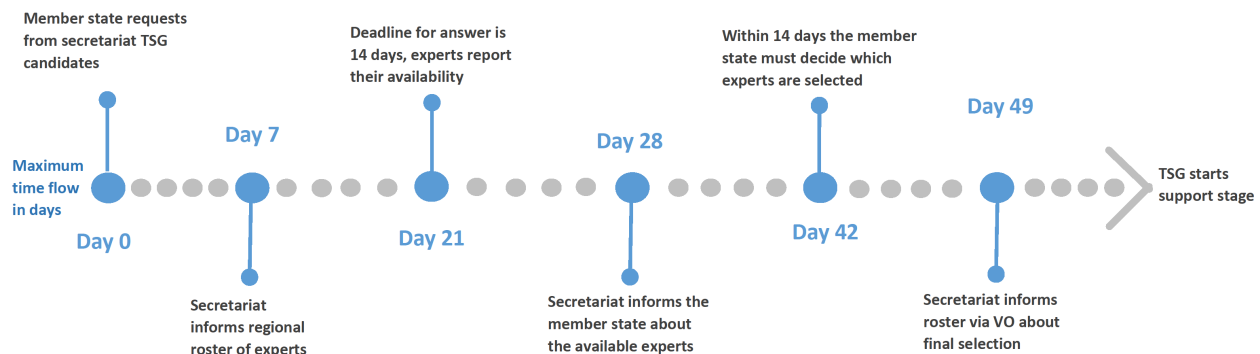
Member state requests from secretariat TSG candidates

Day 0

Maximum time flow in days

Day 7

Secretariat informs regional roster of experts

Deadline for answer is 14 days, experts report their availability

Day 21

Day 28

Secretariat informs the member state about the available experts

Within 14 days the member state must decide which experts are selected

Day 42

Day 49

Secretariat informs roster via VO about final selection

TSG starts support stage

FIGURE 5. TIMELINE FOR THE FORMATION OF A TSG IN SUPPORT OF A MEMBER STATE

4.6.3.   Agree on specific terms of reference

The INSARAG Support and Recognition Process of National Accreditation Processes responds to standard terms of reference that will be jointly reviewed by the INSARAG Regional Chair, supported by INSARAG Secretariat, and the requesting member state once the self-assessment and the supporting documentation submitted has been reviewed.

General Objective

Advise and support the requesting member state in the design and review of the national accreditation process of USAR teams.

Specific Objectives

- Provide guidance in the adoption or adaptation of the guidelines and steps of the national USAR accreditation process.
- Provide guidance in the adoption and/or adaptation of national USAR team capacity standards.
- Build awareness and disseminate the guidelines and steps to be implemented in the national accreditation process of USAR teams.

Considerations

- **Duration:** The process should not last longer than 18 months, with a single extension of up to 6 additional months. There should be a work plan, to be carried out for each stage of the process, as well as a schedule for its implementation, with a clear definition of when the objectives will be achieved, and which establishes the participants' roles and responsibilities.

- **Working Methodology and Modalities**: The requesting member state, TSG and TRG must develop the working methodology and modalities based on the following guidance:
  - Establish a communication system (for example, WhatsApp).
  - Establish a system to share files and information (Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.).
  - Create a document containing the topics and agreements developed between the TSG and the member state.
  - Hold a teleconference to establish first contact between the member state's responsible parties and the TSG.
  - Define the first stage of work starting with the self-assessment, review, and request for information.
  - The TSG proposes a work plan to the member state, based on the self-assessment information and attached documents reviewed and discussed.
  - Hold another teleconference to agree on the work plan between the member state and the TSG.
  - The work plan indicates the times for support and document preparation and/or review required by the TSG.
  - Hold teleconferences regularly to review the work plan and aspects of compliance or results of the documentation review.

Important: There must be always close and participatory communication and consultation with the INSARAG Secretariat.

4.7. Support Stage

Development of Activities: The following table summarizes the activities that should be developed during the support stage, aimed at sharing information between the TSG and the requesting member state for review and corrections, respectively:

Steps of the Support Process	Maximum suggested time
1. Review and consensus on the self-assessment and verification document of the requesting member state: • Request clarification of doubts or supporting documentation regarding the self-assessment. • It is necessary to consult with the member state and the INSARAG Secretariat prior to any decision/statement on the self-assessment. • The objective is to reach a consensus on the self-assessment. • The TSG will use a "colour methodology" to assess progress in each of the items of the self-assessment and verification during the entire IRNAP process.	90 days
2. Adaptation and agreement on the TSG's terms of reference as well as preparation and agreement on a work plan for the support and recognition process according to the level of development of the national process (consolidated, advanced, design), based on the results of the self-assessment. • At least 1 or 2 visits to the member state are recommended, ideally at the beginning (to have a mutual understanding of the process, to discuss the self-assessment and agree a work plan) and at the end of TSG work. • The TSG prepares a work plan proposal and presents it for discussion to the requesting member state. Both parties must agree to the work plan. Contingencies and possible changes in the work plan must be considered. • In many cases, especially when the member state is at the design level of its national accreditation process, a face-to-face meeting is **mandatory** and of utmost importance to explain the scope of national INSARAG standards, as well as the guidelines and steps of a national USAR accreditation process.	30 days

Steps of the Support Process	Maximum suggested time
The work plan is developed by the TSG together with the requesting member state. • As part of the work plan, the TSG and the requesting member state establish a timeline with deadlines for the fulfilment of the different goals, as well as a schedule of meetings, electronic correspondence and, if necessary, in-person visits to monitor progress. • At this stage, the observation of a national accreditation exercise must be incorporated into the work plan as a fundamental part for the verification of compliance with INSARAG standards and the INSARAG External Support and Recognition Process, which determines an in-person visit of the TSG to the member state. This observation is mandatory. • The TSG and the requesting member state must agree on an exchange, management, and archiving system of relevant documentation for the process. • The requesting member state is expected to create a Working Group dedicated to the process.	
3. Submission by the requesting member state of progress/follow-up reports on the implementation of the national USAR accreditation process, as agreed in the work plan. • This follow-up will use the self-assessment and verification format, completing the information contained in it as necessary.	30 to 180 days
4. Review of progress/follow-up reports by the TSG and submission of comments to the requesting member state, keeping the INSARAG Regional Chair and INSARAG Secretariat informed.	
5. Analysis by the TSG together with the requesting member state of the progress made in the implementation of the national accreditation process. • The self-assessment and verification format is used as the basis for this analysis. • In line with this joint analysis, the TSG and the requesting Government shall determine the appropriate time to proceed to the final verification visit or whether the process needs to be redesigned or extended. • If there is relevance, the TSG prepares the report to be presented to the INSARAG Secretariat to begin the recognition stage.	30 days or more if the redesign or extension of the support and recognition process is determined

4.8. Recognition Stage

Once the TSG and the member state have determined that the standards requested in the Support Stage of the process have been reached, the TRG carries out the verification visit for the Recognition Stage.

Development of Activities: The following table summarizes the activities that should be carried out during the recognition stage, aiming to determine if the requesting member state complies with INSARAG standards in its national accreditation process:

Steps of the Recognition Process	Maximum Time Suggested
1. *Designation of the Technical Recognition Group*: The INSARAG Secretariat will send the request to the experts within the Regional Roster who in turn will respond with their availability to visit and verify the member state. The INSARAG Secretariat will choose at least two experts from different countries from the member states with the option of adding/accepting additional members in training as part of the TRG. The INSARAG Secretariat will accompany the experts on the verification visit. A Team Leader will be identified by the Regional INSARAG Secretariat The TRG must have a global vision and ensure the quality of the process regarding INSARAG guidelines, steps, and standards for INSARAG external recognition.	30 days

2. *Verification of compliance with the standards, guidelines and steps of the national accreditation process*: The member state and the Technical Recognition Group will determine the appropriate time to visit the requesting member state (mandatory) during which the entire National Accreditation Process will be reviewed.
• Through the INSARAG Secretariat, the TRG and the requesting member state must agree on the detailed agenda of the visit as well as the expected results.
 	
   o Meeting with authorities.
   o Meeting with the Accreditation Committee.
   o Documentation review of any pending aspects.
   o Review of the exercise development methodology.	

Steps of the Recognition Process	Maximum Time Suggested

o Application of the verification instrument during the exercise.
 	
• The final verification is made based on the USAR national standards checklist and the list of guidelines and steps of the national accreditation process.
 	
    • The verification is carried out reviewing:
        i. Documents
        ii. Evaluation instruments (tools)
        iii. Observations
        iv. Interviews
 	
The verification will cover:
 	
• Preparedness
• Mobilization and arrival to the theatre of operations
• USAR operations
 	
Annex 02 - Checklist of National USAR Accreditation Process criteria and stages.
 	
Checklist of INSARAG national standards available at www.insarag.org.
 	
• The duration of the visit depends on the agreed agenda, but should not exceed 3 days:
    i. Documentary review.
    ii. Compliance with steps and guidelines.
    iii. Application of the INSARAG standards verification instrument.
    iv. On-site review of a national USAR team accreditation process.
• In case of non-compliance with a standard, guideline or step of the national accreditation process, a timeline for its implementation is agreed with the member state, as well as the method of evaluation (which, if possible, should not involve another in-person visit to the member state by the TRG).	

Steps of the Recognition Process	Maximum Time Suggested
3. *Final Report:* The TRG will prepare a report of its activities and of what has been verified and will share it with the requesting member state and the INSARAG Secretariat. It must include the verification instrument. *Annex 03 - Template for the final report.* • The Secretariat informs the Regional Chairmanship Group about the result of the INSARAG external support and recognition process.	15 days
4. *Feedback and improvement of the recognition methodology:* It is considered necessary that both the support and recognition methodology of the TSG and TRG, respectively, and the work modalities are improved with the experience acquired in each process. In this context, each of these groups is also expected to document their experience in a feedback report addressed to the INSARAG Secretariat and the regional list of experts to serve other INSARAG Recognition Processes and the continuous improvement of the work methodology. *Annex 04 - Template for the TSG and TRG feedback report.*	15 days

4.9. Verification Methodology

The TRG will use a verification checklist to identify the state of progress in the implementation of the national INSARAG guidelines, steps, and standards, determining four levels according to the following colours:

- **Green** with "Y" (representing "Yes") indicates that the aspect meets or exceeds the minimum standards.
- **Yellow** with "M" indicates that the aspect meets the standards. However, it is suggested that additional improvements be made in the given aspect. The reasons why the yellow box was marked are provided in the observations on the checklist.
- **Orange** "RT" (which represents "Requires Time") indicates the aspect still does not meet the standards because it has pending conditions that impair compliance with the minimum standards. (For example, a document exists, but it has not yet been approved by the pertinent body.) In this case, a timeline for its implementation is agreed with the member state, as well as its evaluation method.
- **Red** with "NY" (which represents "Not yet") means that the aspect still does not meet the minimum standards. If one or more red boxes are marked, it is considered a weak system/process that does

not meet the minimum INSARAG standard. In this case, a timeline for its implementation is agreed with the member state, as well as its evaluation method.

This methodology will be used for the self-assessment review (including progress reports) to prioritize the areas that require a particular emphasis on the work plan to be developed for the Support Process, and for the final verification of compliance with national standards and the guidelines and steps of the national USAR accreditation process.

- The final verification must have all aspects in yellow or green for the TRG to recommend to the INSARAG Secretariat the issuance of a certificate of recognition to the member state.

4.9.1. Re-trying the Verification

In the rare case that the TRG determines that the recognition standards have not been met i.e., one or more checklist points are marked Orange or Red, the mandated national accreditation entity together with TRG and the regional chairs shall agree on a work plan to address the identified gaps within the next six months. The representative of the INSARAG Secretariat will act as a neutral mediator in this decision process.

For the re-try of the IRNAP only those checklist points that did not pass have to be verified. Depending on the issues identified, this can be accomplished by another visit or via virtual meeting/observation of an operational item or by submitting evidence.

4.10.   External Recognition

The INSARAG community decided to issue a visible form of recognition to the national authorities who have incorporated and implemented the INSARAG methodology in their own national standards and accreditation processes. It is also a way for the INSARAG community to promote national accreditation and capacity-building processes.

4.10.1. Certificate of Recognition

After receiving the final report of the Technical Recognition Group, the Secretariat will issue an administrative recognition by means of an INSARAG certificate of Endorsement to the national authority in charge of the implementation of the national USAR accreditation process that will be valid for ten years from the date of issuance. (See Figure 5). After 10 years a revalidation audit by a TRG member(s) will be completed to ensure the INSARAG processes and accreditation processes continue to be implemented to include a process on implementing needed updates.

FIGURE 6. CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

4.10.2. Badge option for teams accredited by national authorities

For the member states whose USAR national accreditation process has been recognized by INSARAG, their accredited national teams may use a badge in the field. It shall meet the following criteria approved by the INSARAG Steering Group in 2018:

- 75 mm x 55 mm rectangular badge.
- Black writing on a white background and a light grey square outline.
- 60 mm x 40 mm flag of the accrediting member state.
- Under the flag, the following:
  - o The words "nationally accredited"
  - o Name of the accrediting member state.
  - o Level and year of accreditation.
  - o 22 mm x 10 mm INSARAG logo.

Template:

Example:

FIGURE 7. EXAMPLES OF BADGES

4.11. Role and Responsibilities of Participants

4.11.1. Requesting member state

- Respect the criteria for INSARAG recognition throughout the national USAR accreditation process.
- Provide experts for the roster of experts for the TSG/TRG.
- Commitment to the INSARAG methodology.
- Have a national USAR System.
- Have a USAR national accreditation process.
- Fund the TSG in the two recommended visits.

4.11.2. Technical Support Group (TSG)

- Advise and support the implementation of the National USAR Accreditation Process.
- Documentary and field verification of INSARAG guidelines, steps, and standards.
- Present a report on the first phase of the support provided and the progress made by the member state to the INSARAG Secretariat.
- Submit a self-assessment of the methodology to the INSARAG Secretariat at the end of the process.

4.11.3. Technical Recognition Group (TRG)

- Apply the format for verifying compliance with national INSARAG guidelines, steps, and standards.

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- Recommend recognition based on the compliance with INSARAG criteria, steps, and standards
- Submit a final verification report.
- Submit a self-assessment of the methodology to the INSARAG Secretariat at the end of the process.

4.11.4. INSARAG Secretariat

- Send a request to the experts to participate in the TSG and TRG, when requested by the Regional Chair.
- Publish the call for experts for the Regional Roster in the virtual OSOCC.
- Review applications and verify compliance with the minimum requirements; then select those who have the appropriate profile to be presented to the Regional Chairmanship Group.
- Present the TSG/TRG roster candidates to the Regional Chairmanship Group.
- Accompany the TRG on the member state visit.
- Follow up on member state that obtained recognition.
- Inform member state of the period of validity of INSARAG recognition.
- Prepare and deliver the Certificate of Recognition.

4.11.5. Regional Chairmanship Group

- Request the call for experts for the TSG/TRG roster to the INSARAG Secretariat.
- Approve the TSG/TRG roster candidates from the regions.

END

5. Annexes

Annex 01 – Template for TSG/TRG request and declaration of commitment

Annex 02 – National Accreditation Process Verification of Criteria and Stages

Annex 03 - Template for the final report

Annex 04 - Template for the TSG and TRG feedback report

Annex 01 – Template for TSG/TRG request and declaration of commitment

[Date]

Sr. Sebastián Rhodes Stampa

INSARAG Secretary,

Emergency Response Section

Response Support Branch

Coordination Division

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Subject: **Request for support from the Technical Support and Recognition Group (TSG/TRG) for the National Accreditation Process Recognized by INSARAG (IRNAP)**

In representation of *[entity, organization]* from *[member state]*, and in my capacity as *[position]*, I am writing to request the support from the Technical Support and Recognition Group (TSG/TRG) for the National Accreditation Process Recognized by INSARAG (IRNAP).

In this regard, *[executing entity and participating institutions]* would like to express the voluntary interest of initiating INSARAG's external recognition of the national USAR accreditation process of *[member state]*. For this, the INSARAG political and operational focal points will provide the necessary support:

•   *[Name and contact details of the INSARAG political focal point]*

•   *[Name and contact details of the INSARAG operational focal point]*

[Explanation whether the member state already has a national accreditation process and if the request is for support in the design of the process, a review of an existing process or another modality[1].]

For all related purposes, the national counterpart responsible for carrying out this process is Mr./Ms. *[name and position]*, who can be contacted via email: *[e-mail address]* or by phone: *[telephone number]*. This process will be carried out in the city of *[name of the city, province, etc.]* and it is intended to start as of *[starting date]*. We estimate that the process will be completed by *[ending date]*.

In addition to the above, the documents previously requested are attached (**Format for self-assessment and verification of compliance with national INSARAG guidelines, steps and standards and the declaration of commitment**).

Sincerely,

*[Signature, name, and position of
the highest national authority of the
risk management system]*

Copy:

- o INSARAG political focal point & operational focal point in the member state
- o United Nations Resident Coordinator in the member state
- o Regional Focal Point of the INSARAG Secretariat/OCHA
- o INSARAG Regional Chairmanship Group

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[1] The IRNAP has defined three levels:

1st level: Design, when the member states that requests support to meet the standards without yet having any existing process.

2nd level: Advanced, when a member state declares it partially complies with the INSARAG methodology's standards and requests support for its full development.

3rd level: Consolidated, when a member state declares it complies with all of the INSARAG methodology's standards and requests support for verification.

Declaration of Commitment

The *[entity, organization]* of *[member state]* declares its commitment to comply with the guidelines and steps of the accreditation process of national USAR teams according to the INSARAG Guidelines and methodology, cover the funding of the process and activities arising from the development of each of the stages, including travel, accommodation and living expenses of the TSG during the visit to the member state, guarantee the safety of these groups during their stay in the member state, implement the recommendations provided by them, and have personnel to liaison with the TSG/TRG and the appropriate means of communication. Signed in *[city]* on *[date]*.

*[Signature, name, and position of
the highest national authority of the
risk management system]*

Annex 02 –*National Accreditation Process Verification of Criteria and Stages*

This document serves as guidance to the requesting member state in the creation or adaptation of its National USAR Accreditation Process. It also provides the basis for the TSG to assess the fulfilment of the criteria and steps.

General Criteria of the National USAR Accreditation Process					
No.	**Aspects**	**Explanation**	**TSG Assessment**	**Verification Method**	**Color**
1	The process shall be led by the national disaster/risk management authority (NDMA) or competent entity mandated by national regulation.	There shall be an official document stating the mandate for the national accreditation entity.		Document	
2	The process shall be part of the national emergency/disaster management framework.	There shall be a national regulation and/or protocol between the relevant authority and the accredited USAR team (protocol for the national USAR response activation and cycle)		Observation	
3	An accreditation committee shall be created, composed of USAR experts and quality control/ audit experts.	Existence of a procedure for the functioning of the National Accreditation Committee, composition, organization chart, rules of its sessions and periodicity thereof.		Document	

No.	Aspects	Explanation	TSG Assessment	Verification Method	Color
4	The accreditation committee shall be backed by the competent national authority/ regulations.	There shall be a document that constitutes the accrediting entity. This entity shall issue a document on the creation of the National Accreditation Committee, in accordance with the power granted to it by the national regulation.		Document	

General Criteria of the National USAR Accreditation Process

No.	Aspects	Explanation	TSG Assessment	Verification Method	Color
5	The process shall be public and open to all USAR response entities and made aware to all.	The protocol between the NDMA and the accredited USAR team is essential if the process if open and public. The State can incur civil and penal liabilities when interacting with non-governmental teams (for example, liability for bad practices of non-governmental USAR teams, accidents while transporting USAR teams, reimbursement of expenses incurred by non-governmental USAR teams, restitution of equipment, etc.) It is recommended to sign commitments considering legal responsibilities.		Interview	

6	The requirements shall be made available to all interested parties, including information on the standards to be achieved. It is recommended to elaborate and make available standard templates and forms for the required documents.	The enrolment to the process by the teams shall be through the completion of templates and forms that contain all the requirements for the accreditation of the USAR team. These requirements shall be in accordance with the INSARAG Guidelines and Methodology. These forms shall be provided by the accrediting entity to ensure that the accreditation process contains uniform parameters for all applicant groups.	Document	
7	The assessment criteria and regulations shall be available to all interested parties before starting the process.	Have a web page or a virtual platform where these forms can be downloaded, as well as meetings to build awareness of the process.	Observation	

			Stages of the National USAR Accreditation Process			
No.	**Aspects**	**Explanation**	**TSG Assessment**	**Verification Method**	**Color**
1	There shall be a formal request/application/ enrolment of the team to the accreditation process with the presentation of a portfolio with relevant documentation (equivalent to the Abbreviated Portfolio of Evidence of the IEC process). It is recommended to request all the verification documentation at the beginning or to request a brief portfolio at first and then the complete portfolio.	USAR teams that initiate the national accreditation process must send all the documentation in the "process enrolment formats" (see point 6). This is because it is a faster verification than the IEC. It is essential that the USAR Team signs a statement of responsibilities in the application letter or request to remain an Accredited Team.		Document	
2	At the discretion of the National Accreditation Committee and the USAR Teams, there can be a person or group of people with extensive administrative and operational experience to guide the USAR team during the different stages of the accreditation process. These advisors must be part of the accreditation system.	The National Accreditation Process will have a roster of experts, which can be requested by the USAR teams for technical, operational and administrative advice and support during the different stages of the process.		Interview	

No.	Aspects	Explanation	TSG Assessment	Verification Method	Color
3	The process shall include a self-assessment by the team.	The National Accreditation Committee must, together with the team applying for accreditation, undertake the documentary self-assessment exercises and field exercises to prepare their final evaluation and thus guarantee success in achieving their national accreditation.		Document	
4	The process shall include an administrative audit of the portfolio presented.	Identification of nonconformities. This first audit is only documentary.		Observation	

Stages of the National USAR Accreditation Process					
No.	Aspects	Explanation	TSG Assessment	Verification Method	Color
5	The process must include a field/on-site audit of the capacities declared in the portfolio provided.	This is a field audit in which the team deploys its operational capabilities through a capacity demonstration exercise. The review considers administrative aspects, equipment, procedures, personnel, logistics, etc. All according to the enrolment formats completed by each team.		Observation	

6	The process must include a field exercise demonstrating skills and competencies.	There shall be a written evaluation guideline, with a score table, which must be known in advance by the applicant USAR Team.		Observation	
7	The process shall culminate in the certification and a formal and identifiable recognition of the team, as well as a commitment by the team to be part of the national response.	The acknowledgment will be carried out by the Accrediting Entity through a badge, ribbon or similar that allows the team to be identified as a specialized USAR team of the National Risk/Emergency Management System.		Document	
8	The member state shall have a directory of accredited national USAR teams, and the accredited team must be registered in it, as well as in the INSARAG directory as a national team.	Keep the directory of accredited teams updated and ensure that they are also included in the INSARAG directory.		Document	
9	The process shall include a regular re-accreditation process for USAR teams.	A period for re-accreditation of maximum 5 years		Document	

Annex 03 - Template for the final report

FINAL REPORT
INSARAG RECOGNIZED NATIONAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS (IRNAP)
[MEMBER STATE]
[DATE OF REPORT]

1. Cover page

2. Table of content

3. Introduction

4. Background

4.1. Request

Explain the member state's request.

4.2. Agreed terms of reference and dates of execution.

Explain how the TORs have been adapted from the generic ones.

4.3. Composition of the TSG

Name	Member state	Quality (member/member in training)

4.4. Composition of the TRG

Name	Member state	Quality (member/member in training)

4.5. Key counterparts in the member state

Name	Organization	Role

4.6. Working modalities

- Briefly explain the working modalities used between the TSG and the member state.

5. Summary of the verification process

This section should indicate the main activities developed by the TRG during the verification visit.

6. TSG Results

- Document the main recommendations issued by the TSG to the member state and the implementation.

  6.1. Areas of special interest for the sustainability of the process

  6.2. Areas of excellence worthy of dissemination

7. TRG Results

- Document the main recommendations issued by the TRG to the member state and its implementation.

  6.1. Areas of special interest for continuous improvement

  6.2. Areas of excellence worthy of dissemination

8. Conclusions

9. [Process and date to request the re-validation of the process]

10. Acknowledgements

11. Signature of the TSG and TRG members

12. Annexes

12.1. Request document

12.2. Agreed work plan

12.3. Details of activities (chronologically)

12.4. TRG verification document.

Annex 04 - Template for the TSG and TRG feedback report

Note: This report is for the TSG regional roster, to be communicated through the Secretariat, which has the role of keeping all reports and sharing them with the regional roster. It is suggested that they be shared through a "private discussion" in the Virtual OSOCC where other relevant documents should be posted as well.

1. Overview

1.1. Background

- Request, dates, member state, brief description of the process and how the advisory process ended.

1.2. Composition of TSG/TRG

Name	Member state	Quality (member/member in training)	E-mail

2. Working methodology

- Advantages, disadvantages, limits, flexibility of the process, etc.

3. SWOT

- Member state limitations for the implementation of the process.
- Flexibility and adaptation of TSG/TRG members

- Comparisons with previous or own member state processes
- Implementation of the work plan and timeline
- Compliance with the recommendations provided by the TSG/TRG

4. Recommendations and improvement opportunities for the TSG/TRG

The recommendations should be focused on improvement opportunities for the TSG/TRG

4.1. General recommendations

4.2. Recommendations on the TSG/TRG methodology