



Chairman's Summary
INSARAG Africa-Europe-Middle East
Regional Meeting
03 September 2021



The 2021 International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Africa-Europe-Middle East (AEME) Regional Meeting took place virtually on 03 September 2021, due to the travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under South Africa's leadership, the meeting sought to advance INSARAG strategic and operational priorities in the region preceding the 3rd INSARAG Global Meeting (IGM), as well as to account preliminary observations on the regional plan of activities. The meeting was organized by the Government of South Africa, National Disaster Management Center, with the support of the INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and was facilitated by Dr. Musiwalo Moses Khangale, Director of the Fire Services Coordination, National Disaster Management Center of South Africa.

The meeting brought together 100 participants from 36 countries. Inputs were consolidated with those from the Americas and Asia-Pacific (AP) regional meetings and shared during the 3rd IGM 2021.

Session 1 – Opening statements, Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. Gemma Connell, Head of OCHA Office for Southern and Eastern Africa (ROSEA), opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and expressing her gratitude to the work that has been achieved under the South African Chairmanship, following the evolving and deteriorating global climate crisis. Ms. Connell emphasised that the devastating cyclones of Mozambique in 2019 and the most recent events in Europe highlight how the work of urban search and rescue (USAR) teams and INSARAG is vital. She was pleased to see the regions coming together across borders, through the midst of the challenging pandemic, and in response to disasters becoming bigger and climate emergencies becoming larger, to make sure INSARAG can still respond to emergencies effectively. She thanked, on behalf of the OCHA ROSEA Office, all the participants for their contributions to the meeting.

Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, Chief of the Emergency Response Section and INSARAG Secretary, welcomed all the participants and expressed his appreciation to the Government of South Africa, and to Dr. Mmaphaka Tau, Head of the National Disaster Management Center, and AEME Regional Co-Chair. Additionally, he reiterated his gratitude to the frontline colleagues working on the pandemic response and the regional disasters. Mr. Rhodes Stampa proceeded by highlighting the key achievements that have been made in the region, including the adoption of the Guidelines for INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) EU MODEX, the fully operationalisation of the INSARAG Coordination Management System (ICMS), the transition to online training and the first responders' program in Iraq and Georgia. Mr. Stampa emphasised the importance of the 3rd IGM in October, to which the network's future direction will be chartered through the endorsement of the Warsaw



Declaration ([Annex 1](#)) which serves to guide the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-26 ([Annex 2](#)) and its four objectives.

Dr. Tau welcomed the participants and introduced the meeting agenda. He highlighted that the pandemic poses a responsibility on INSARAG to jointly adopt a high degree of flexibility in order to adapt and remain fit for purpose. Regarding the climate crisis affecting these regions, in particular Africa, the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 enhances localisation and flexible response to improve response and agility required to effectively respond to disasters. Dr. Tau called upon the region to contribute its efforts in strengthening global standards of high quality internationally and nationally and enhance front line response by localizing INSARAG methodology and concepts. Dr. Tau declared the meeting open and wished for fruitful engagements.

Session 2 – Regional and Global Updates

Dr. Khangale introduced the session, which explored the Global and Regional updates of the network. The Global updates were given by Mr. Clement Kalonga, INSARAG AEME Regional Focal Point, who highlighted the key achievements of the past year.

Mr. Kalonga acknowledged how well the network is adapting to the new challenges, mostly represented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the network used this time to reflect and recalibrate its work, the Flexible Response Working Group (FRWG) was formed, and focus was given to the different response missions of the past year (including Beirut in 2020, the forest fires in Europe this summer, and the earthquake in Haiti in August 2021). Due to the on-going restrictions caused by the pandemic, the INSARAG External Classifications and Reclassifications (IEC/R) were postponed with an extension of two years, and the IEC/R Review Working Group was formed in 2020. With the ongoing pandemic, the role of INSARAG became crucial in supporting the countries’ frontline responses to COVID-19, helping the vulnerable communities. To achieve this, the Joint Statement between the Medical Working Group of INSARAG and the Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) was endorsed. The statement calls for teams to respect the pandemic regulations of the affected country and encourages the vaccination of international responders. Adapting to the new challenges meant also to change the modalities of most of the work carried out by the network – for this reason, most of the meetings, trainings, and exercises were and will continue to be carried out online (as happened in the Americas Region with the PERU Simulation Exercise (SIMEX) 2021 and in Asia-Pacific with the Earthquake Response Exercise (ERE) in November 2021). In terms of partnerships, Mr. Kalonga highlighted the adoption of the IERs in the EU MODEX Guidelines and the ongoing collaboration with the WHO EMT for the Field Response Guidelines. Lastly, he mentioned the future face-to-face activities: the IEC of the Far Eastern Regional Search and Rescue Team (FER SAR) of EMERCOM of Russia in September, the IER of Swiss Rescue, the IEC of @Fire Germany, and the IER of Pompiers Urgence Internationale (PUI), which will all take place in November this year.

Mr. Agus Haryono, Director for Preparedness, National Search and Rescue Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (BASARNAS), on behalf of Regional AP Regional Chair, Air Marshal Henri Alfiandi, gave the regional updates of the region. Mr. Haryono presented the activities



carried out in the past months of 2021, which included ICMS Basic Training, the informal call of the Asia-Pacific region and updates on the National Accreditation Process (NAP) – with the INSARAG Recognised National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) Working Group officially formed in February 2021, and the establishment of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the AP Technical Support Group (TSG) and Technical Recognition Group (TRG), with the development of the relevant Training Workshops.

In February 2021, Indonesia updated the AP Regional Strategy 2021 - 2026 following four main pillars, in line with the INSARAG Strategic Plan, focusing on enhancing multi-level capacity building and protection in humanitarian responses, strengthening effective national and regional response during a disaster, flexible response, the deployment of USAR capacity and strengthening engagement with partners in disaster planning and management.

The annual priorities include conducting virtual workshops and webinars on best practices and expertise in emergency response, strengthening USAR capacity at the national and regional level through implementation of NAP, promoting INSARAG methodology to be fit for purpose in different responses and strengthening collaborative partnership nationally and/or regionally for effective coordination within humanitarian responders. The AP Annual Workplan 2021, which set the priorities for 2021 and 2022, was developed by the Regional Chair and supported by the Troikas and INSARAG Secretariat. The 1st INSARAG Recognised National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) Exercise in Singapore was postponed from October 2021 to 2022, along with the IRNAP AP Road Map Seminar in Indonesia.

The AP IRNAP Working Group was established in February 2021, supporting INSARAG NAWG in promoting NAP and IRNAP within the AP region. Mr. Haryono announced that with the establishment of the AP TSG and TRG, relevant training workshops and roster have been developed. The Working Group is supported by the INSARAG Secretariat in Bangkok which consists of 10 active members from Asia-Pacific representatives from the Training Working Group (TWG) and the National Accreditation Working Group (NAWG). Mr. Haryono announced the plans for the Asia-Pacific ERE hosted by China and co-hosted by Indonesia on 24 – 26 November 2021. The event was endorsed at the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting in 2021, in harmony with the Strategic Plan, and has adopted guidance from ERE guide V.2. The Government of People’s Republic of China will conduct the ERE virtually for three days, consisting with: Preparation Session, Exercise Session and Debriefing. As the event is remote, it will be held via platforms such as GDACS, Zoom, ICMS, Miro and Simulation Video. The participants of the event include LEMA, USAR Teams, EMT, UNDAC, OCHA, UN Office in China, AP Regional Organizations and NGOs.

General Alfredo Enrique Murgueytio Espinoza, Head of National Civil Defense Institute of Peru (INDECI) and the Americas Regional Chair, gave a video presentation to illustrate the regional updates from the Americas Region. The activities, based on the four Strategic Objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan, include the IRNAP in the region, the expansion of the TSG and TRG roster and the development of working meetings with a group of experts from several countries in the region to design the course, which is in the final design phase. On the front of the objective of strengthening USAR coordination capabilities in the region, the Americas have a National USAR Coordination Course designed to be carried out face-to-face, and a version is being developed to be implemented virtually. A course for

instructors on USAR Information Management is also being organized, and a first course on the use of the ICMS has been developed with the support of the Global Training Working Group. In relation to the issue of flexible response, the Regional Group on Flexible Response is being formed and led by Brazil and Argentina. Likewise, experts from the region are participating in the FRWG at the global level with participation in the three WG sub-groups. Lastly, General Murgueytio Espinoza, presented the Regional SIMEX Peru 2021 exercise which took place virtually from June 21 to 25 of this year. The exercise put into practice the use of the INSARAG 2020 Guidelines, as well as the use of the ICMS Platform, among other mechanisms. The work was challenging but the objectives were achieved, being the first SIMEX Virtual Exercise of this magnitude to be developed in the context of INSARAG with more than 1600 people involved, considering both participants and observers.

Session 3 – Regional Technical Working Groups Updates

Mr. Martin Evers, Deputy National Commander USAR Netherlands and INSARAG Operational Focal Point, provided an overview of the eight regional Working Groups (FRWG, IEC/R WG, IMWG, LTWG, MWG, NAWG, TWG, TGRWG) and their progress.

- **The FRWG** has been recently constituted and started its work. It is divided into three Sub-WGs: Global Position, Disaster Assessment Coordination Centre (DACC) and Cultural Heritage. The next meeting of the FRWG will be held on 17 September 2021
- **The IEC/R Working Group** is currently working on renewing the work on the guidelines, working on quality assurance and revising the classifiers list and the IEC Roster 2022.
- **The Information Management Working Group** has launched the new ICMS v2.0. Mr. Martin Evers encouraged the Member countries to respond to the Secretariat’s call to support the ICMS multi-year licensing.
- **The Light Team Working Group** is working on the Classified Light USAR IEC assurance process, which was completed and approved by the INSARAG Secretariat. The first classification for the @Fire team from Germany will take place in November 2021.
- **The Medical Working Group** continues working with the WHO-EMT (Joint Statement, Operational Field Guidelines for Covid-19 response, Haiti EQ information sharing) and on the ongoing revision of the Medical Guidelines.
- **The National Accreditation Working Group** is reviewing the Generic TOR TSG/TRG roster, as well as planning for virtual/physical training for the roster, updating documents (checklists, technical guidance note) and supporting regional efforts.
- **The Training Working Group** has been working on the USAR Coordination Manual v2.0 revision, the National USAR Coordination Course supporting WGs virtually and looking for 2022 USAR Coordination Manual Revision by USAR Teams and further endorsement, and on updating the USAR Coordination Course Package.
- **The Transitional Guidelines Review Working Group** is revising the Draft USAR Coordination (UC) manual, and continuously collecting feedback from the network.

The AEME network appreciates the strong commitment and dedication of the Working Group members.

Session 4 - Warsaw Declaration: consultations for endorsement

Lieutenant Colonel Michał Langner, Deputy Director, National Center for Rescue Coordination and Civil Protection, National Headquarters of the State Fire Service of Poland, moderated the session on the consultations of the Warsaw Declaration, document of importance for the network, which follows the Hyogo Declaration, signed in occasion of the 1st IGM in Kobe, Japan, in 2010 ([Annex 3](#)), and the Abu Dhabi Declaration, signed in occasion of the second IGM in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in 2015 ([Annex 4](#)).

The Warsaw Declaration was announced in 2020 and will be officially endorsed during the third IGM on 06 October, virtually co-hosted by the Government of Poland and the INSARAG Secretariat. LTC Langner encouraged the participants to send their feedback by 08 September to make sure that the declaration is well recognised and accepted by all the Members in the region. He also urged the region to choose two or three relevant points of the Warsaw Declaration that are the most important from a strategic perspective. These topics will be further developed by the regions in the following five years. LTC Langner mentioned that the document refers to five main pillars:

1. **Quality Standards**, mentioned in clauses four and five, which refers to the importance of focusing on the quality of USAR operations, recognizing the importance of quality assurance and practices to ensure interoperability, and relates to the adoption and dissemination of the INSARAG Guidelines;
2. **Localization**, mentioned in clause six, which refers to NAP, as countries and especially disaster-prone countries are encouraged to develop and use the NAP to have professionals and well qualified teams ready to assist and respond when necessary;
3. **Flexible Response**, mentioned in clause seven, encourages the network and rescue teams to be agile and flexible in the operations of other disaster relief activities, given the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather-related events due to climate change.
4. **Partnership**, which encourages Members to be open for new countries and members to join the network and to bring together international responders and global networks to strengthen the response to major disasters;
5. **Pandemic Response**, mentioned in clauses eight and nine, which calls for the priority for the responders to be vaccinated as well as to strengthen the involvement and commitment in fighting the pandemic crisis.

Session 5 - INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026: Development of the AEME Regional 2022 Workplan and 30 –years of achievements

Dr. Khangale introduced and moderated the session. Participants were split into four breakout groups for 15 minutes, to discuss and map the key activities of the region following the four Strategic Objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan: Quality Standards, Localisation, Flexible Response and Partnerships. Each breakout room was led by the

current and incoming Troika Members and INSARAG Secretariat and reported back into plenary.

[The key activities mapped out by each one of the groups were inserted and included in the Regional Workplan for 2022 \(Annex 5\).](#)

[\(2022 Workplan of the AEME in Annex XXX\)](#)

Group One: Quality Standards

Mr. Winston Chang, INSARAG Unit Head, presented Group One’s discussions. The possibility for whether USAR teams could develop secondary skills to improve quality standards of response and other types of rescue capacities was queried. INSARAG Steering Group has reiterated that although INSARAG is focused primarily on search and rescue, due to the current climate crisis, INSARAG will explore the idea of increasing capacities to see what more can be offered. INSARAG can learn from the standards of the IEC system, USAR standards, and Water Rescue Standards, but does not have the capacity to have standards for everything. Group One also discussed the initiative of looking beyond the rescue in disasters and what INSARAG can do to support disaster responses further. Also, questions regarding whether there will be a two-year delay in the classification, and whether this may be further delayed as a result of COVID-19, were answered. In terms of activities, INSARAG will continue to run and plan activities that have been postponed from 2020 to 2022.

Group Two: Localisation

Mr. Peter Goxharaj, INSARAG Operational Focal Point of Germany, presented the groups’ discussion on the topic of Localization. Mr. Goxharaj expressed the importance of localisation and capacity building, which will continue with the First Responders Training (FRT) in Cyprus and Palestine this year and in 2022. He also expressed his hope that in 2022 a new Fire Fighters FRT will take place in Georgia, where firefighters will be able to train their colleagues in remote fire stations in the mountains.

In collaboration with Italy, Germany will continue to carry out Structural Engineering Training in Sicily and a USAR Coordination Course, for practitioners to refresh their memories and to have the opportunity to work with colleagues in the field. The National Accreditation Process (NAP) will begin in Cyprus in 2022. Mr. Goxharaj expressed the need to address the barriers countries face when accessing training. These barriers include limited country budgets, especially with translating the manuals into all countries’ respective languages. He announced that in 2022, e-learning videos from the Structured Engineering Training in Sicily will be produced, along with a 20-page technical guidance document that will be accessible for all levels. He highlighted the disproportions between rich countries in the Europe and Middle Eastern region compared to countries in Africa, expressing the need to do more for the African region. Therefore, as sponsored by Germany, a Structured Engineering training only for African participants will be held.

He concluded with reminiscing on the lessons learnt from the disasters in Mozambique which supported the response to the recent large-scale flooding in Germany. In light of the climate crisis, Mr. Goxharaj recognised that this cannot be stopped, but when the INSARAG

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family comes together, we can learn from past experiences to be better prepared for the future.

Group Three: Flexible Response

Mr. Clement Antoine Pauty, from the INSARAG Secretariat, presented the outcomes of the discussion on Flexible Response. The discussion started by highlighting the relevance of the Flexible Response concept, considering the changing humanitarian landscape, the climate crisis and the recent experiences, such as the wildfires in Turkey.

Questions were raised by the participants regarding how the concept can be adapted to the USAR teams and how they can be given the capacities to be flexible. The discussion focused on how to adapt existing teams to respond flexibly and use their capabilities to know more about the hybrid capacity of those teams.

Turkey led the discussion and announced that in 2022 they will be developing workshops to identify the thematic areas where they can contribute to the Flexible Response with their USAR teams.

To conclude, it was mentioned that FRWG was created, and its next meeting will be held on 17 September 2021. The objective of the Working Group is to develop the concept of Flexible Response and to adapt it to different regional contexts.

Group Four: Partnerships

Mr. Ahmad Abdullah Al Kuwari, Qatar Head Logistics Officer, presented the groups discussion on the topic of Partnerships and how to promote them. During the discussion it was mentioned the example of the European Union (EU), in the agency of the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), which coordinates and enhances the partnerships between different agencies, NGOs and other organizations.

The group discussed the possibilities that the private sector entails, a critical factor for mission deployments. The discussion had one member of a private organization, he provided quality insights about their work.

Mr. Ahmad al Kuwari concluded by thanking everyone for participating in the session and recommended to strengthen partnerships and open partnerships beyond Safe and Rescue.

Session 6 - Update on the INSARAG Global Meeting Preparation

LTC Langner provided to the participants updates regarding the third IGM on 06 October, virtually co-hosted by the Government of Poland and the INSARAG Secretariat.

The preparations for the IGM are at final stage and all under control, with 157 participants currently registered to attend. Video conferences within the INSARAG Secretariat and Poland are being held regularly to discuss the agenda, the speakers, and technical issues. He then expressed his appreciation for this collaboration with INSARAG and OCHA and confirmed that there will be translation service during the IGM. Additionally, he announced that a professional company has been hired to help with organising the meeting to ensure

the quality and standard of the IGM is not reduced, despite being online and to avoid technical issues on the day. Lastly, he encouraged all participants to register for the IGM, as well as for the Virtual Exhibition Area, and urged teams in all countries to send photos, videos, and comments of memories from IEC/IERs or missions, via the Canvas Sheets.

Session 7 – Closing Remarks

On behalf of the AEME Regional Chair, Dr. Khangale expressed appreciation for the Regional Meeting. All participants were invited to join the upcoming the 3rd IGM

Dr. Khangale highlighted that despite restrictions moving activities online, these past two years have been successful and remote-working needs to be built to ensure that even if COVID-19 persists, INSARAG’s work does not suffer. As COVID-19 is making response more complex and challenging, there is an escalating need for INSARAG to adapt and remain relevant and fit for purpose. He expressed the importance of flexible response and localization for the future of INSARAG. The current climate is causing more frequent and intense storms; therefore, the notion of flexible response and localisation is essential to ensure INSARAG is building capacity that is robust and agile at the local level to reduce the loss of life. The next FRWG -meeting in September will discuss how to bring the concept into practice. Partnerships are a critical component of INSARAG’s agenda and Dr. Khangale expressed his appreciation for aligning with like-minded bodies to consolidate resources and good practices. Partnerships allow INSARAG to expand its methodologies, and the need to build partnerships with other agencies is made even more relevant by COVID-19. He stated that we do not lose our identity by partnering with others, but rather strengthens it. He concluded by encouraging all participants and teams to get vaccinated against COVID-19, when possible, and expressed his appreciation for the successful meeting ahead of the IGM.

On behalf of the INSARAG Secretariat, Mr. Clement Kalonga thanked the National Disaster Management Center of South Africa for hosting the meeting, as well as the INSARAG Secretary, the Regional Chairs, and all the participants for their interventions. He further expressed deep appreciation for the strong commitment of the INSARAG network and encouraged members to contact the Secretariat, whenever the need arises.

Annexes

Annex 1: [IGM Warsaw Declaration](#)

Annex 2: [Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#)

Annex 3: [Hyogo Declaration \(2010\)](#)

Annex 4: [Abu Dhabi Declaration \(2015\)](#)

[Annex 5: AEME Workplan 2022](#)

Drafted by the INSARAG Secretariat and approved by the Regional Chair and Troika 2021.
Date: November 2021

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