



Chairperson's Summary of the INSARAG New Year Teleconference of Global, Regional and Working Group Chairs

12 January 2022, 1400 – 1515h
CET (UTC +1)



Introduction

The INSARAG New Year Teleconference of Global, Regional and Working Group (WG) Chairs was held remotely on Wednesday, 12 January 2022, and chaired by Ambassador Manuel Bessler, the INSARAG Global Chair and Deputy Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Head of the Humanitarian Aid Department and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit. The meeting was facilitated by Mr. Clement Kalonga, the INSARAG Secretariat Focal Point for Africa. The meeting was attended by over 70 participants.

The meeting provided the opportunity to thank outgoing Regional Chairs (Poland, Indonesia, and Peru) and welcome incoming Regional Chairs (Turkey, South Korea, and Honduras). Participants reflected on achievements in 2021 and looked ahead to a potentially challenging year in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Regional Chairs discussed their workplans for 2022, and representatives from Qatar and the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW) Secretariat shared updates on preparations for the Team Leaders Meeting in Qatar in March, and the HNPW in May. The INSARAG Unit Head also provided progress updates on Flexible Response concept, Bilateral Response concept, and Information Management Coordination System (ICMS) funding, and discussed issues for endorsement during the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) meeting in May.

Session 1: Opening remarks, updates, and potential COVID-19 impacts on INSARAG activities in 2022

Ambassador Manuel Bessler welcomed participants to the Teleconference and wished everyone a Happy New Year. He thanked the outgoing 2021 Troika members – Poland, South Africa, Peru, and Indonesia – for their leadership and contributions, and welcomed Turkey as the incoming Chair of the Africa-Europe-Middle East (AEME) region, South Korea as Regional Chair of the Asia-Pacific region, and Honduras as Chair of the Americas region. The Global Chair highlighted the importance of the four Objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026, namely, Quality Standards, Localization, Flexible Response, and Partnerships and highlighted the particular importance of flexibility in response to COVID-19 and climate change.

The Global Chair also reiterated the challenges that often accompany bilateral response but emphasized its importance, which was a key topic throughout 2021. He reflected on what was a successful year for the INSARAG network despite the pandemic and noted the successful responses to forest fires and floods in Europe and the earthquake in Haiti.

The network also held its first in-person INSARAG External Classifications (IEC) and Reclassifications (IER) since the pandemic began in Russia and Switzerland, with @FIRE Germany becoming the first INSARAG Classified Light team. Ambassador Bessler stressed

the value of the unique peer-to-peer IEC/R process and encouraged all colleagues to maximise its potential.

Ambassador Bessler lastly commended all eight Working Groups for their continuous work on adapting INSARAG methodologies to reflect the changing emergency response landscape, and specifically mentioned the INSARAG-Recognised National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) and the ICMS as examples of this.

Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, INSARAG Secretary, thanked the Global Chair for his continuous support to the network over the last few years. He highlighted three of INSARAG's key achievements in 2021:

1. Funding for the ICMS has been secured for the next three years, and the INSARAG Secretary expressed his sincere gratitude to the nine countries contributing.
2. There have been several developments in localization, including through the First Responders Program (FRP), and the INSARAG Secretary announced that the network will seek to endorse version 2.0 of the FRP during the ISG meeting. He was encouraged by the increasing popularity of the IRNAP, with Indonesia beginning the process and Singapore due to undertake the first recognised IRNAP exercise in 2022.
3. The network's success in bolstering partnerships throughout the year.

The INSARAG Secretary delivered updates about the potential impact of COVID-19 and potential postponement of activities planned for 2022 but reiterated that the Secretariat will continue to support its teams.

For a summary of the INSARAG Year in Review, please refer to the INSARAG Annual Snapshot 2021 [here](#).

Session 2: Briefing on Regional Strategic Plans for 2022 by Regional Chairs

Regional Chairs – Turkey, Honduras, and South Korea - presented their Regional workplans for 2022.

1. Africa-Europe-Middle East (AEME) Regional Chair – Turkey

Governor Yunus Sezar, Head of Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) of Turkey, thanked previous regional chairs for their work. He announced that the AEME region considers 2022 a year of preparation, coordination and capacity building, reflecting on the increasing frequency and magnitude of disasters.

Turkey has aligned the regional action plan with the objectives set out in the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026:

1. **Quality Standards:** The AEME region will be hosting the Team Leaders and Working Groups meeting in Qatar in March, the ISG in Geneva in May, an Earthquake Response Exercise in Turkey in October, IECs of Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Tunisia, SARAID (second Light Team classification), IERs of Armenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, and will organize workshops to further disseminate ICMS.
2. **Localization:** The USAR Coordination Cell course will be hosted in February by ISAR Germany; Somalia and Zimbabwe will undergo the First Responders Training; and Turkey plans to implement Africa Outreach plans for capacity building.

3. **Flexible Response:** The region plans to actively participate in the Flexible Response Working Group.
4. **Partnerships:** The region is looking to strengthen its partnership with the European Union through the integration of IER in EU MODEX cycles and relevant trainings planned in 2022.

2. Americas Regional Chair – Honduras

Mr. Oscar Mencía, Deputy National Commissioner, Permanent Contingency Commission, spoke on behalf of the Americas Regional Chair, Mr. Max González, Minister Secretary of State for National Risk and Contingency Management Permanent Commission on Contingencies. Honduras plans to resume pending activities from 2021 and carry out its planned activities and events for 2022.

Strategic Objectives:

1. **Quality Standards:** in 2021 a successful ERE was conducted virtually, and Honduras is still evaluating how to carry it out this year in the context the pandemic. The Deputy National Commissioner highlighted the relevance of the NAP, currently carried out in Panama and initiated with Chile. In 2021, the INSARAG Guidelines were translated into Spanish, and in 2022 the Americas region will continue to disseminate them.
2. **Localization:** the USAR National Coordination Course is ready to be conducted and the region has planned a workshop to discuss and implement USAR good practices. The region will also be collaborating with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) on the Forum of Local Brigades organization.
3. **Flexible Response:** Honduras announced that the Americas region will be actively participating in Flexible Response sub-working groups. Mr. Oscar Mencía also highlighted that Brazil and Argentina are going to lead a regional group on Flexible response and have planned a workshop on their experiences of bilateral response to the Haiti earthquake.
4. **Partnerships:** In addition to collaborating with the IFRC, the region will strengthen its partnerships with El Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central, Organización de Bomberos Americanos, and Emergency Medical Teams.

3. Asia-Pacific Regional Chair – South Korea

Mr. Seongchul Choi, Sectional Chief, Rescue Division of the Korean National Fire Agency, spoke on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Regional Chair Mr. Yil Lee, Director General 119 Rescue & EMS Bureau of the Korean National Fire Agency. Mr. Choi informed that the Asia-Pacific regional workplan has embraced the four Strategic Objectives:

1. **Quality Standards:** The Asia-Pacific region will continue to elaborate the INSARAG methodology through active participation in IEC/Rs planned for New Zealand and Japan, and by cultivating experts to support the IRNAP, where Singapore will begin the process at the end of 2022.
2. **Localization:** The region will hold a virtual IRNAP Technical Workshop in February as part of the National Accreditation Working Group global initiative, and a virtual IRNAP TSG/TRG workshop from 19 to 21 January.
3. **Flexible Response:** The region will facilitate virtual discussions for pre-emptive preparedness and response to new types of disasters beyond urban search and rescue.

4. **Partnerships:** The Asia-Pacific region will continue to seek new partnerships with disaster-related organizations and strengthen existing partnerships.

Session 3: Updates on Team Leaders and Technical Working Groups Meeting – hosted by Qatar in March 2022

Lieutenant Colonel Mubarak Sherida Al Kaabi, Qatar International Search and Rescue Group of the Internal Security Force Lekhwiya, provided participants with the agenda, updates, and COVID-19 advisory and contingency plan regarding the Team Leaders and Technical Working Groups Meeting in March. This would be the first in-person meeting in two years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Technical Working Groups Meeting will be held from 7 to 8 March, with participation from the eight working groups, including three sub-groups. Lt. Col. Mubarak Sherida Al Kaabi announced that additional days can be requested to be added to the meeting. The Team Leaders meeting will be held from 9 to 11 March and the agenda will be the following: 1) updates and key development, 2) Haiti 2021 Earthquake debrief by responding teams including from Argentina, Columbia, SARAID, and the United States, 3) UC Manual version 2.0 and First Responders Program version 2.0, 4) panel discussion on IEC/Rs, acknowledging the first light team. The cut-off date for the meeting format is 1 February, and 7 February for the hotel reservation.

Lt. Col. Mubarak Sherida Al Kaabi reiterated that the ongoing pandemic may create complications for hosting the event. Any changes to the event as a result of the pandemic will be conveyed on the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (VOSOCC) and via email. Qatar has developed a COVID-19 Contingency Plan for the meetings, offering two alternatives in the case of further travel restrictions — a hybrid event, where the INSARAG Secretariat and groups of participants will meet face-to-face in Qatar and registered participants will join remotely, or a fully remote event, which will run as a two-day event for Team Leaders and modular sessions held by Working Groups.

Session 4: Updates on hybrid Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW) 2-20 May, and INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting 10 May

Mr. Thomas Peter, Head of the LEP/HNPW Secretariat, and Ms. Noelia Blascovich, LEP/HNPW Secretariat, provided the INSARAG network with updates on the development and organization of the HNPW 2022. Mr. Winston Chang, INSARAG Unit Head, then discussed the ISG meeting arrangements in May and the six topics that would be discussed.

Ms. Blascovich announced that the HNPW will be hosted by the Swiss Development Corporation and organized by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as a three-week hybrid event from 2 to 20 May. The first week (2 to 6 May) and last week (16 to 20 May) will be held remotely, with the middle week being held face-to-face in Geneva. The Priority Topics at the HNPW have been renamed to “Areas of Common Concern”. There will be four types of sessions at the HNPW: 1) Network Sessions, which are internal networks’ meetings, 2) Briefing Sessions, which include updates on and an introduction of a project, network, tool, etc., 3) Technical Sessions, including joint workshops with other networks or within a particular theme, 4) Exhibition Area sessions for networks to upload and promote their work.

The deadline for session and exhibition registration is ongoing for the event program. 14 January is the deadline for face-to-face and hybrid sessions and exhibition stands. 31

January is the deadline for verification and publication of face-to-face (and hybrid) sessions on the HNPW portal, completion of requests for OCHA senior management attendance at all sessions, invitations by networks to their stakeholders. Participant registration will open on the 31 January.

Mr. Peter discussed how INSARAG can engage with the Areas of Common Concern by nominating delegates to participate in inter-network sessions, reviewing actionable recommendations (ISG) and developing plans of action for their implementation.

Next, Mr. Chang, discussed the upcoming INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) flagship meeting, planned for 10 May. The meeting will be split into two sessions: session 1 from 10:00 to 12:30 and session 2, from 14:00 to 15:30 (CET). In addition, INSARAG members will be participating in Technical Sessions at the HNPW, with a meeting tentatively planned with the WHO (EMT) and Medical Working Group for 10 May from 16:00 to 17:00, and a two-day meeting of the Working Groups Chairs and Co-Chairs on 9 and 11 May. Additionally, INSARAG is in discussions with partners to hold ICMS and OSOCC/UC in a tent at the exhibition area in the CICG venue, with UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) and the Joint Environmental Unit (JEU) from 9 to 13 May. COVID-19 restrictions may potentially mean that the ISG meeting will take place in remote format, which will be decided by the 8 April. The “live feed” for participants who cannot attend in person will be shared in due time, following guidance from the HNPW Secretariat organisers. During the ISG, the network will discuss the following six issues for progress updates and endorsement:

Progress Update:

1. Flexible Response Global Position (Flexible Response Working Group)

Sub-WG A Global Position is developing a concept on INSARAG’s position on Flexible (Operational) Response, based on the Regional Position Papers drafted on this topic in 2020.

2. ICMS Multi-Year Funding Plan (IMWG and Secretariat Lead)

The ICMS is crucial for the coordination of USAR teams in emergencies. The previous strategies of funding the system is no longer possible, therefore INSARAG will need to find alternative plans to fund the system. The multi-year contribution plan secures license procurement for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024 with voluntary funding from the INSARAG network.

3. Strengthening the coordination of Bilateral Response (T-GRG Lead)

Following a series of network discussions in 2021, it was recommended that INSARAG strengthens and clarifies the guidelines on bilateral response. INSARAG will be enhancing the necessary steps for when teams provide direct assistance on a bilateral basis upon a request from an affected government. Recommendations from these consultations will be discussed with members and outlined in the INSARAG Guidelines in their next revision.

Endorsement:

4. National Accreditation Process V2.0 documents (National Accreditation Working Group Lead)

The INSARAG Guidelines 2015 include a complete manual on national and local capacity building and recommend that countries establish a national USAR team accreditation mechanism in order to “manage, monitor and establish the same standards officially and adhere closely to the INSARAG standards and guidance in developing [their] USAR national response systems”. The National Accreditation Process (NAP)/INSARAG Recognized

National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) is gaining momentum among INSARAG members, and regional TSGs/TRGs are an essential component of this. Endorsing the Technical Support Group (TSG)/Technical Recognition Group (TRG) Training Package is crucial in order to provide clear guidance and support to the NAP/IRNAP.

5. First Responders Program V2.0 (Training Working Group Lead)

Building the first tier of local capability involves the training and development of existing local emergency services and community responders to meet the needs of the affected population at the onset of the incident. To assist in the development of USAR First Responders, INSARAG developed the First Responders Training Package (FRTP) in 2015. The update focused on improving capacity building related to local rescue in the immediate response to a sudden-onset disaster. The development of the second version of the FRTP is based on the notion that when disasters strike, resilience building can be as useful as international USAR deployment.

6. UC Manual V2.0 (Training Working Group Lead)

The USAR Coordination Manual provides guidance on the methodology of USAR Coordination to train and prepare USAR team members for national and international operations. The methodology has been synchronized with the OSOCC Guidelines and UNDAC Handbook. The update was required in order to align the manual with the ICMS and to ensure that there were no discrepancies between INSARAG, UNDAC and Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) reference documents, with a view to strengthening the coordination and effectiveness of assistance provided to affected countries.

Session 5: AOB and Closing Remarks

The INSARAG Secretary thanked all participants for their contributions and active engagement during the Teleconference and reiterated that the past two years have made him confident that despite the challenges, INSARAG can adapt to overcome difficult circumstances and continue its life-saving work.

The INSARAG Global Chair, Ambassador Manuel Bessler, closed the Teleconference with three points: Firstly, he encouraged participants to stay in contact despite the restrictions, emphasising that personal contact is the most important asset of the INSARAG network. Secondly, he offered to participate in any upcoming meetings in 2022. Thirdly, he encouraged all participants to register for sessions of their interest at the HNPW. The Global Chair was confident that despite the pandemic, INSARAG will continue to fulfil its mandate of saving lives in 2022.

Drafted by the INSARAG Secretariat with feedback from the ISG Group.