

Introduction

The INSARAG New Year Teleconference of Global, Regional and Working Group (WG) Chairs was held remotely on 17 January 2023, 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 Reem Naim, Emergency Response Associate working with the Emergency Response Section for the Americas Region, UN OCHA and INSARAG Secretary. The meeting was attended by 47 participants.

During the meeting, the participants had the opportunity to review the achievements made in 2022 and to discuss the 2023 workplans of the regions and working groups. The agenda for the call can be found in [Annex A](#) and the PowerPoint presentation in [Annex B](#).

Session 1: Opening Remarks on Latest Developments and Year in review

On 17 January, the New Year Teleconference was opened by Ambassador Manuel Bessler who welcomed all participants. He thanked the outgoing troika members of 2022– Türkiye, Honduras and South Korea and welcomed Qatar as the 2023 current Chair in the Africa, Europe and Middle East Region, Argentina as the 2023 current chair in the Americas Region and New Zealand as the 2023 current Chair in the Asia Pacific Region.

The Global Chair reflected on the success of nine INSARAG External Classifications/Reclassifications and extended thanks to the mentors and the Secretariat for making these Classifications/Reclassifications possible ensuring that the network is kept up to standard. He reiterated increasing critical issues that our network will face such as climate change and food insecurity, urging the network to continue to be prepared, trained and ready to aid to assist those in need. He highlighted that preparedness and response are two factors that are needed to continue our strong work and emphasized the importance of meeting as a network to continue exchanges to fulfil our mandate. Exchanges such as the current New Year Teleconference and the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week are vital for the growth of our work.

The Global Chair highlighted our priorities in the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026 noting (1) Localization (2) Quality Standards (3) Flexible Response and (4) Partnerships. He emphasized the discussions on Flexible Response and expressed excitement for the engagements on this topic at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week in April. He encouraged the Regional Groups to have internal discussions regarding this, reminding everyone that these discussions should continue to uphold and strengthen the mandate and quality standards of the INSARAG network.

The INSARAG Secretary Sebastian Rhodes Stampa provided thanks to Ambassador Manuel Bessler for his strong leadership and engagements through the hurdles over the years including the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasised INSARAG's strong position with 90 member countries engaged in the network including 58 INSARAG Classified teams from 48 countries, as well as the continuous need to be prepared in the event of a disaster. He showed gratitude to the

working groups for their efforts, who continuously improve the quality standards in the way the network operates. He highlighted the upcoming INSARAG Governance Review, as it is of great importance to be fit for our purpose and to adapt to new changes and challenges that may arise. The Secretariat will be reaching out to the Network to request support for the review. He highlighted the aim of the New Year Teleconference is to share a common understanding of regional activities so we can ensure appropriate coordination and synergies throughout the year and across the network.

For a summary of the INSARAG Year in Review, please refer to the INSARAG Annual 2022/2023 Snapshot in [Annex C](#).

Session 2: Regional Strategic Plans for 2023

Regional Chairs shared their respective regional updates and achievements of 2022 and key points from their 2023 workplan.

i. Africa, Europe and Middle East (AEME), Chair - Qatar

Col. Staff Mubarak Sherida Al-Kaabi Commander of the Qatar Search and Rescue Team (QSART) and the 2023 Regional Chair for the AEME Region shared various key achievements for 2022 including three IEC classifications; Medium Classification of the Tunisia Civil Protection USAR Team, Light Classification of the GEA USAR Team (AEME), Light Classification of the SARAID USAR Team (AEME) and one Medium IER of the Armenia Urban Search and Rescue Team. He noted that in 2023, we will be seeing more in-person events and trainings for the region.

Col. Staff Mubarak Sherida Al-Kaabi emphasized that the AEME Region's priorities will continue to align with the mandate of being inclusive and effective, while strengthening cooperation of the Africa, Europe and Middle East Network through these various trainings exercises and meetings. He encouraged a strong focus on alignment of the four pillars of the global strategy on Quality, Localisation, Flexible Response and Partnerships. He discussed the need to continue to prepare USAR teams for response and to strengthen localization and national USAR teams. He shared the potential to support disaster prone countries in the region with one key focus being the strengthening of INSARAG's value added and adaptability to tap on coordination and preparedness.

He highlighted as climate challenges and political agendas may seem to be crosscutting issues, INSARAG must live out our core values of neutrality and continue to be strongly focused on being relevant and fit for purpose.

ii. The Americas, Chair – Argentina

Ambassador Sabina Frederic, President of the Argentine Agency for International Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance-White Helmets (ACIAH) and the 2023 Regional Chair for the Americas Region shared the regional workplan that was agreed at the last Regional Chairmanship Meeting. The Strategic Objective of Quality Standards includes the Global and Regional Meeting planned for 2023. In August the International Earthquake Response Exercise

will be held in Argentina. During the last quarter in 2023, the INSARAG Regional meeting will be held in conjunction with the UNDAC Consultative Regional Meeting for the Americas. Furthermore, the production of a regional INSARAG newsletter and the dissemination of INSARAG Guidelines in collaboration with the Americas Fire Fighters Organization will be produced.

Ambassador Sabina Frederic emphasized the importance of the IRNAP activities that fit within the Strategic Objective of Localization. She noted that the list of Regional IRNAP Experts for the Technical Support Groups and Technical Recognition Groups will be updated through a broad call of applications and the implementation of the IRNAP course developed in the region. Currently the countries in the region that are undergoing their Technical Support Group Phase are Panama, Argentina, Ecuador, and Honduras, and some other countries may start during the year. The region continues to actively participate in the INSARAG Working Group on National Accreditation with Chile as a Co-Chair. Four courses on USAR National Accreditation and six courses on USAR National Coordination developed in the Region will be given to six Central American countries. Further activities include; the dissemination of the ICMS tool in Spanish with the support of IMWG, the First Responders Course 2.0 Pilot Course dictated in Spanish in Ecuador with support from the TWG, Local Brigades Regional Experiences Exchange in collaboration with IFRC and Workshop on USAR Best Practices in the Region.

Regarding the Strategic Objective of Flexible Response, Ambassador Sabina Frederic pointed out that the region is actively participating in the Flexible Response Working Group specifically in the sub-group on global position. She mentioned that a request has been made to hold meetings prior to the ISG to more effectively incorporate input from the regions especially from the Americas. She expressed that the region proposes to develop flood response capacity as a priority of the flexible response development contributing to this INSARAG Strategic Objective.

In 2023, the Americas Region is working in coordination and in partnerships with; CEPREDENAC to develop IRNAP processes in its member countries and is actively collaborating in the support for the III Regional Simulation in Central America. She mentioned that building on the work done in 2022, the community of practice between USAR medical components and EMTs will be strengthened. The excellent partnerships with American Fire Fighters will allow the Americas to agree on a plan of action this year. Furthermore, the Americas regional group expects to strengthen collaboration with IFRC on localization issues and local brigades.

Finally, she emphasized that the INSARAG Americas Regional Group participates in global discussions relevant to the strengthening of USAR teams and seeks to broaden the response to face the growing challenges due to factors such as climate change, encouraged by the shared aim of saving more lives.

iii. Asia Pacific (AP), - New Zealand

Mr. Paul Turner, National Manager Response Capability of the Fire and Emergency New Zealand and the 2023 Regional Chair for the Asia-Pacific Region highlighted the events taking place in the Region including; The Team Leaders and Working Group Meeting in Singapore, The INSARAG Earthquake Response Exercise in Australia, The Asia Pacific Regional Meeting in New Zealand and the IER of the Republic of Korea. He also expressed to gratitude towards the outgoing chairs, Republic of Korea for their support.

The Asia-Pacific region has fully aligned and harmonised their workplans with the Strategic plan 2023, he highlighted as a part of the Quality Standards the upcoming Team Leaders and Working Groups meetings in Singapore and the Steering Group Meeting. He pointed out the importance of the promotion of IRNAP activities as a way of increasing domestic capabilities, and as a route to classification, it is vital to strengthen relationships with Pacific Island Countries. Mr. Paul Turner emphasized the region's contributions to and promotions of flexible response within the Asia Pacific Region. He added that the region will continue to promote and coordinate engagement and partnerships to improve capability.

Session 3: Updates from Technical Working Groups Chairs/Co-Chairs

Working Group Updates

WG Chairs/Co-chairs provided statements on key activities (achievements 2022 and workplan 2023):

i. Flexible Response Working Group

On behalf of the co-chairs Paul Baxter and Paolo Vaccari Mr. David Sochor gave his remarks and expressed that all regions have endorsed the general concept of the Flexible Response Global Position. Mr. David Sochor noted that there is dissonance amongst the region in the topic of Flood Response, as the Americas Region is strongly advocating that we move quickly into this concept, while the Africa, Europe and Middle East Region are expressing ongoing concerns that we must stay in line with our principles and standards of the existing INSARAG mandate. There is more to discuss on a regional level prior to discussions in April at the HNPW.

ii. IEC/IER Working Group (IEC/R WG)

Co-Chair Annika Coll gave her remarks and noted that the working group was in a period of refinement which included revising the composition, the terms of reference, the leadership if needed as well as the IEC/IER process. Co-Chair Annika Coll, expressed that the working group is using this as a strategy for Quality Assurance, ensuring continuous improvement.

iii. Information Management Working Group (IMWG)

Co-Chair Peter Wolff gave thanks to the INSARAG community for the busy and successful year of 2022. Co-Chair Peter Wolff expresses that the IMWG will focus on training on UCC in collaboration with the Training Working Group and ICMS trainings in 2023 to quality and seamless collaboration. Co-Chair Peter Wolff expressed the IMWG is working towards the improvements of the ICMS system such as tasking and automatic reporting and are expecting to have an updated version running after the Team Leaders Meeting in Singapore. Expressed that there are upcoming useful ICMS trainings taking place face to face as well as virtual on the VO to improve the use of our ICMS system. In addition, Mr. Wolff expressed there is an ongoing review of the IMWG manuals and terms of reference to ensure updated versions are in use. Ongoing efforts to improve the training in the Spanish speaking countries are taking place with the partnership of GISCorps.

Co-Chair Jeff Maunder shared that the IMWG is looking to introduce drone or UAS technology/imagery and starting to look to other classifier tools to assist with the classifications.

He expressed that the working group is working a lot more and collaborating with agencies like MapAction for effective outcomes for mapping intelligence.

iv. Medical Working Group

Co-Chair Dr. Anthony Macintyre expressed the excitement for the upcoming Meeting in Singapore with many important topics to discuss. He noted that there are many items to discuss such as the updates to the COVID-19 protocols that was provided in the past as well as new research for the treatment and management of Crush-Syndrome.

Co-Chair Dr. Anthony Macintyre mentioned the continuing of the longstanding collaboration with WHO and the Emergency Medical Teams (EMT), where this past year they were a part of the community of interest that the Pan American Health Organization started for the Americas and is looking forward to their annual meeting at the HNPW in April.

v. National Accreditation Working Group

Co-Chair Sebastian Mocarquer noted that the working group is now focusing on reviewing the experience of last year's IRNAP processes from Cyprus, Singapore, and Chile. He expressed that the Working Group is working closely with the Americas to develop a five-day IRNAP training course and hopes to later deliver that training to Asia Pacific and then in the future to AEME region. The Working group is planning to meet in Singapore for the Team Leaders Meeting and then later Geneva for HNPW. Co-Chair Sebastian Mocarquer expressed he is looking forward to discussing on expanding the National Accreditation Working Group's role to a National Capacity Building Working Group that could encompass IRNAP process but also National USAR coordination. The National Accreditation Working Group will be making a call for new members mainly from the Africa, Europe and Middle East Region as well as one position from the Americas Region.

vi. Training Working Group (TWG)

Co-Chair Dewey Perks expressed excitement of having Tsukasa Katsube as the new Co-Chair. Discussed upcoming items coming up for the Training Working Group discussed during the eventful meeting in Germany in December 2022. He noted the participation of the TWG in Singapore for the Team Leaders Meeting as well as the Leadership Course in the Netherlands.

The TWG would like to expand its focus to ensuring all team members know how to properly utilize the system and noted that the TWG will be constructing three different courses that will be laid out more during the Team Leaders Meeting in Singapore. Furthermore, he mentions that any gaps noted within the Earthquake Response Exercise format will also be discussed during the meetings in Singapore.

Co-Chair Tsukasa Katsube reaffirms the importance of INSARAG's work for the last 30 years when recalling the Kobe earthquake that occurred 28 years ago on this day.

Session 4: Updates on the HNPW and INSARAG ISG Meeting, Issues for Consultation

Ms. Lorena Abalos, focal point of the Humanitarian Networks and Partnership Week (HNPW) Leading Edge Programme highlighted the details of the two-week HNPW event taking place in a hybrid format from 17 to 28 April 2023. Hosted by SDC, and organized by OCHA, Ms. Lorena noted the different types of sessions including the network sessions, joint sessions, AOCC sessions and the Exhibition area.

Mr. Winston Chang, INSARAG Global Lead, ran through the seven engagements for INSARAG during the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week including; the INSARAG Steering Group Meeting, the General Assembly 57/150 20-year anniversary commemorative session, various Working Group meetings, Annual meeting between the WHO Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) and Medical Working Group, a session on refining the INSARAG Earthquake Response Exercise amongst governments and international responders, and an in-person partnership exhibition.

Mr. Chang reported on the ten issues around the four pillars of INSARAG'S Strategic Plan and requested for the network's feedback after in depth discussions take place during the INSARAG Steering Group Meeting to further the direction moving forward for regional implementation.

Session 5: Latest Developments and Upcoming Activities 2023 and Closing

Master of Ceremony Ms. Reem Naim thanked all participants for their contributions and active engagement and encouraged members to pencil down the upcoming key dates of 2023 which are shown in our INSARAG Calendar ([Annex F](#)).

Ms. Reem Naim, noted that 25 events have been confirmed for 2023 and 20 other events will be confirmed in due time. These events include global, regional, country-level meetings, trainings, events and exercises. As the Master of Ceremony, Ms. Reem Naim welcomed network members to participate in these events and to look out for announcements from the Secretariat well in advance for more information.

Ambassador Bessler thanked Sebastian Rhodes Stampa and the Secretariat team in OCHA Geneva for their efforts and dedication to follow up on the issues, and all participants who joined the meeting and reiterated the importance of the call to keep INSARAG's work moving onward.

Annexes

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| Annex A | NYT Agenda |
| Annex B | NYT presentation in PDF |
| Annex C | INSARAG Annual Snapshot 2022 |
| Annex D | INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 – Endorsed Version |
| Annex E | Spanish Version - INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026 – Endorsed version |
| Annex F | INSARAG 2023 Calendar |