

Overview

70 participants from 20 countries and organizations working on urban search and rescue (USAR) gathered for the annual International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Asia-Pacific (A-P) Regional Meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), on 20 October, 2015. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex A**.

The meeting was hosted by The Ministry of Interior of the Government of the United Arab Emirates and New Zealand (NZ) the Regional Chair 2015, and co-organised by OCHA in its capacity as the INSARAG Secretariat that is located in the Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) in the Emergency Services Branch (ESB) of OCHA Geneva.

Summary of presentations and discussions

Official Opening

Ms. Davene Vroon, co-Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Group, New Zealand, opened the annual INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting 2015 by welcoming the participants and thanking the hosts, the Government of the UAE, for their hospitality. She started by reminding the participants that in the first few months of 2015 the region was tested by a number of significant disasters, culminating in the earthquake in Nepal and the floods in Myanmar. As always, the countries in the region responded with generosity and commitment with many examples of assistance and support. She emphasized the importance of the region working together to develop a long-term vision and plan for building USAR capability in the region. She concluded by looking forward to the meeting and the many issues for discussion, including the development of light teams, discussions about a modular response and the further development of a "beyond the rubble" capability.

Mr. Markus Werne, Head of ROAP, thanked the Regional Chair for the invitation to the meeting and also thanked the UAE for hosting the Meeting. He stated that the region had worked long and hard to improve capability but disasters still overwhelm countries in the region. He noted that all the major deployments of USAR capability since the last Global Meeting have been in the Asia-Pacific region. He challenged the participants to look deeper into the plans for this region, to develop strategic programmes and to make sure our work will be meaningful within the broader context of the INSARAG community.

Introduction of Participants and Adoption of the Agenda

Participants briefly introduced themselves. The meeting adopted the agenda unanimously (see **Annex B**).

Asia-Pacific Key Events and Progress against the Work Plan

Mr. Paul Baxter, co-Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Group, NZ, reminded participants of the ambitious plan that the region implemented in the previous year, identifying the major milestones of the year's activities. These included the IEC (INSARAG External Classification) of New Zealand, the IER (INSARAG External Reclassification) of Japan, the Earthquake Response Exercise in Mongolia, the Sendai meeting and the World Humanitarian Summit Consultation Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand. He reminded delegates that the Region also looks forward to the OSOCC (On-Site Operations Coordination Centre) Management Skills Training Course and the International Firefighters Challenge both in Singapore in November. He summarized the outcomes of the A-P troika meeting the previous day where the three chairs unanimously agreed to the development of a 5-year strategic plan for building USAR capability in the region. This would include developing light teams, modular capabilities, exercises and classified teams.

Setting the Scene – Strategic Approach to Building Capacity in the Asia-Pacific Region

Ms. Davene Vroon introduced a short video introducing the Asia-Pacific Region, its risks and capabilities for disaster response. She identified a number of issues that the meeting needed to discuss and posed a series of questions to the meeting delegates. These were:

- Does the region require more INSARAG Classified teams and do we need a system of national classification within the region?
- Would the region benefit from national USAR teams that may not be fully classified but would be accredited and able to deploy to other countries within the region?
- Should the region take on more responsibility for re-classification of teams within the regional context?
- Should the period of chairmanship be extended? How should the issue of succession be managed?

She asked the participants to consider their response to these questions and asked them to contribute fully to the breakout sessions where they would be debated.

Asia-Pacific Regional Vulnerability

Mr. Markus Werne, Head of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), OCHA, explained OCHA's approach to determining regional priorities. He profiled the risk assessment tool 'INFORM' which prioritises countries in the region on the basis of their disaster vulnerability across a range of hazards. ROAP has researched the question of what is the added value of the international community to augment national capacity. Speed and volume of humanitarian assistance in the early stages of a disaster is one clearly identified way of augmenting country's capacity when needed. The key requirements are food, water, shelter, health and the logistics to move these resources. For those high-risk countries, advanced preparedness actions and contingency planning in turn leads to the development of a Contingency Plan. The plan provides a useful basis for targeting capacity building investment in the region to ensure that those countries most vulnerable to specific hazards are supported to prepare for and respond to those hazards. It was proposed that this assessment and prioritization approach could help to form the basis for building USAR capability in the region. Mr Werne undertook to share more information about INFORM's assessment approach with the chair and interested members.

INSARAG External Classification (IEC) and Modular Approach

Mr. Paul Baxter discussed the current situation with the classification process. Although 43 teams globally have achieved classification, the process is very resource and funding intensive and not all countries within the A-P region will necessarily achieve classification of medium or heavy teams. However, it is important to support countries to develop appropriate light/first responder capacity or modular capabilities that are relevant, appropriate and cost effective in line with respective country contexts.

He also raised the issue of taking a more modular approach to the make-up of a USAR response team. He felt that matching the needs of the local population is important and in many cases the modular response approach is most appropriate. This would consist of the best mix of capabilities (search, medical, logistics, rescue etc.) dependent upon the need of the population. He added that competition between medical and USAR response for valuable logistic support does not benefit anyone, least of all the affected population. Teams need to work closely together and make full use of each other's respective strengths and capabilities. In some contexts, heavy USAR capability may not be appropriate, but a lighter, more modular and diverse mix of skills and capabilities would be more beneficial and this capability should be available beyond the immediate rescue phase.

Capacity Building Initiatives in Asia-Pacific

Mr. Paul Baxter facilitated the panel discussion on capacity building and experience sharing from the Philippines,

Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Mr. Jesus Nelson B. Morales, Colonel Group Commandar, the Philippines Air Force, the Philippines, introduced the capacity building projects in the Philippines, and asked the INSARAG A-P Group to send a USAR Capacity Assessment Mission for the Philippines Air Force USAR team in 2016.

Mr. Arun Pinta, Director of International Cooperation Affairs Section, Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) Thailand, delivered a presentation on the INSARAG USAR Capacity Assessment Mission in April 2015 where China, NZ and Singapore sent their USAR experts. He explained DDPM's plan for their future IEC. Singapore is currently supporting them as Mentor.

Maj-General E.M.M. Ambanpola, Deputy Chief of Staff, Sri Lanka Army and Sri Lanka INSARAG Operational Focal Point, Sri Lanka, reminded participants of past events in Sri Lanka and briefed them on the current situation regarding SAR activities and the gaps in capability that have been identified. He introduced their capacity building project, and asked assistance from the member states in the region.

Mr. Rameshwor Dangal, Joint Secretary of Ministry of Home Affairs, Nepal, introduced the capacity building project in Nepal. This programme will result in a tiered response, based on a volunteer capacity, a First Responder network and finally a Medium USAR component. This capacity building programme is planned to be completed in 3 ½ years and Mr Dangal looked forward to the assistance from the member states in the region.

Mr. Ali Ahmed Khan, Brigadier of Bangladesh Fire Services, Bangladesh, reminded participants of past disasters affecting Bangladesh and the current situation regarding the volunteer programme and the USAR capacity in the country. He introduced their study on "A Massive Building Collapse Incident Management in Bangladesh" (Rana Plaza accident in 2013).

Dr. Muhammad Farhan Khalid, Deputy Director, Punjab Emergency Service, Pakistan introduced the Rescue 1122 Service to the participants. This is a comprehensive rescue and emergency response service with components dealing with fire, rescue, hazmat and USAR incidents. From this base, Pakistan has developed the Disaster Response Force, first deployed in the floods of 2014. The team are now complying a POE and are planning an IEC in 2017. He welcomed assistance from the member states in the region in this capacity building programme.

Workshop: Asia-Pacific Capability 2020

The meeting then split into four groups for breakout sessions intended to produce ideas and suggestions for the Asia-Pacific Regional capability plan 2015- 2020. Four moderators, selected from within the region, guided the groups through the process of answering the selected questions including a) how to build and prioritise capacity building in the region over the next 5 years (light, national and classified team); b) whether to explore a classification process for national teams and c) whether to review the IER process.

The four groups concluded their discussions and met in plenary to share and review the responses. The results are attached as **Annex C** to this summary.

In the plenary discussion, the below points are agreed:

- (1) A-P recognizes the INFORM risk management tool to identify priority countries for USAR capacity building
- (2) A-P agrees to the value of developing a benchmark for current capability in the region (eg through a capability matrix)
- (3) A-P agrees to exploring (with Troika facilitation) the establishment of a regional working group on building national capability including a recognized classification process (based on existing guidelines)

in partnership with OCHA

- (4) A-P regional group meets in Geneva in February to discuss a forward plan/strategy for 5 years that can be presented in China next year for discussion/endorsement
- (5) Donor countries meet in Geneva (back to back with the Steering Group Meeting in February) next year to discuss priority areas for investment and support based on risk and donor ability to support, in accordance with the INFORM risk management tool.
- (6) A-P requests each country who wants capacity support to develop a plan. Recommend that the INSARAG network supports those countries to do that.
- (7) NZ to draft ideas for revising IER process in partnership with OCHA for consideration in Geneva.
- (8) A-P agrees to develop a longer term succession plan for chairmanships
- (9) A-P endorse the workplan for 2016 (below)

Priorities for Asia-Pacific 2016 Work Plan

The meeting discussed a provisional work plan for 2016. It was agreed that New Zealand would develop a draft framework for a 5-year plan based on the results of the Asia-Capability 2020 breakout sessions and circulate this prior to February 2016. This draft plan will be further discussed at the A-P Troika Meeting in Geneva (February), the INSARAG Regional Exercise in Indonesia (July) and the INSARAG Regional Meeting in China (August).

Provisional agreement was reached on holding a number of events, some already planned for 2016. These events are as follows:

- INSARAG Steering Meeting and A-P Troika (and donor countries) Meeting, Geneva (February)
- IEC for SMART, Malaysia (March)
- INSARAG USAR Capacity Assessment Mission, the Philippines (April, tbc)
- INSARAG Refresher Workshop, Bangladesh (April/May tbc)
- INSARAG A-P Regional Earthquake Response Exercise, Jogjakarta, Indonesia (July)
- INSARAG A-P Regional Meeting, China (August)
- INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting, Japan (September, tbc)
- IER for KDRT, Korea (November, tbc)

Development of Chairman's Summary, Welcoming 2016 Chair and Announcing 2016 Incoming Chair – Announcement of International Events by the Member States

Malaysia was proposed as the next Vice-Chair, becoming the Chair in 2017. Malaysia thanked the meeting for the nomination and agreed to stand.

China was confirmed as the Chair of the INSARAG A-P Regional Group 2016. Mr Zhao Ming accepted this role on behalf of China, and welcomed participants to the next A-P Regional Meeting in Beijing in August 2016.

In accordance with decisions in the Regional Group, New Zealand becomes the Vice-Chair (out-going Vice-Chair), and Malaysia (in-coming Vice-Chair in 2017) will become the Vice-Chair for this period.

The INSARAG Secretariat and members of the INSARAG A-P Regional Group expressed their deepest appreciation and thanks to the Governments of the UAE and New Zealand for hosting and supporting the meeting.

End of A-P Regional Meeting

INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting 2015

Chairman's Summary
20 October, 2015 Abu Dhabi UAE

ANNEXES:

Annex A: Participants List

Annex B: Meeting Agenda

Annex C: Summary of Responses to Asia-Pacific Capability 2020 Workshop

Participants List

	Country	Organization	First name	Last name	Title	e-mail
1	ASEAN Indonesia	ASEAN SECRETARIAT	Adelina Dwi	Ekawati Kamal	Head of Disaster Management	lina@asean.org
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Annex A

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Annex A

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53	New Zealand	NZ Mission, Abu Dhabi	Jeremey	Clarke-Watson	Ambassador	
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Annex A

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Monday, 19 October

All day Arrival and Registration of Participants

INSARAG Global Meeting (All participants are encouraged to attend)

Tuesday, 20 October

8:30 – 9:00 **Official Opening**

Ms. Davene Vroon, Chair, Asia-Pacific Regional Group

Mr. Markus Werne, Head, Regional Office for Asia-Pacific (ROAP), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

9:00 – 9:15 **Group Photo**

9:15 – 09:30 **Introductions of Participants and Adoption of the Agenda**

Mr. Yosuke Okita, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Field Coordination Support Section and INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

09:30 – 10:00 **Asia-Pacific Key Events and Progress against the Workplan**

Mr. Paul Baxter, Chair, Asia-Pacific Regional Group

10:00 – 10:30 [Tea/Coffee Break](#)

10:30 – 10:40 **Setting the Scene – Strategic Approach to Building Capacity in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Ms. Davene Vroon, Chair, Asia-Pacific Regional Group

10:40 – 10:50 **Asia-Pacific Regional Vulnerability**

Mr. Markus Werne, Head of OCHA-ROAP

10:50 – 11:00 **INSARAG External Classification (IEC)**

Mr. Paul Baxter, Chair, Asia-Pacific Regional Group
IEC Experience and “Beyond the Rubble Pile”

11:00 – 12:30 **Capacity Building Initiatives in Asia-Pacific**

Philippines
Nepal
Sri Lanka
Thailand
Bangladesh
Pakistan

Annex B

Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting 2015

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- 12:30 – 13:30 **Lunch Break**
- 13:30 – 15:00 **Workshop: Asia-Pacific Capability 2020**
- 15:00 – 15:15 **Tea/Coffee Break**
- 15:15 – 16:30 **Report Back from the Breakout Groups**
Ms. Davene Vroon, Chair, Asia-Pacific Regional Group
Mr. Paul Baxter, Chair, Asia-Pacific Regional Group
Mr. Yosuke Okita, OCHA-FCSS
- 16:30 – 17:00 **Development of Chairman's Summary and the Regional Workplan 2016, Welcoming 2016 Chair and Announcing 2016 Incoming Chair**
Announcement of Events by Member States
Nomination of INSARAG Regional Troika in 2016

End of INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting

Summary of Responses to Asia-Pacific Capability 2020 Workshop

(1) Capacity Building – Support for an A-P 5-year strategy

Summary of Discussion:

- Strong endorsement for a staged approach: proposed the development and training of 'first responders' in the first instance, followed by training and capability in OSOCC and ability to receive international teams.
- Rather than focusing predominantly on INSARAG IEC classification, the INSARAG community could consider an INSARAG National Classification system (e.g. badges/qualification for teams) that recognizes teams have developed technical capability (i.e. an IEC minus the international deployment component)
- The group recognized the value of OCHA's INFORM Risk Management Tool, noting its use in supporting the region's planning for where efforts should be focused and resources directed to build capability.
- Countries seeking support with training and capacity building should develop a capability building plan (e.g. 5 years) for their country before assistance is provided, to ensure that it is targeted to needs and sustainable, and has progressive building blocks. National capacity/capability building should be aligned with INSARAG guidelines. National plans can feed into the A-P regional capability development planning process.
- Linked to having a clear plan for national capacity building is the need for clear targets and success criteria for reaching sufficient capacity.
- The group recognized the increasing difficulty of attracting donor funds, particularly in relation to funding for developing IEC capability. Donors far more likely to want to support development of a first responder approach rather than supporting international deployable capability. Funds/resources could best be directed to building national capability in the first instance.
- The group noted that more effort should be focused on identifying ways in which countries could professional and formalize their national capability building (e.g. where countries they do not necessarily want to build medium/heavy teams, but professionalize/formalize classification/accreditation for their light teams).
- Many countries have built light teams, but these are not captured on the INSARAG map – consideration needs to be given as to how we acknowledge and bring this capability into the baseline.
- The importance of leadership by regional chairs, commitment to peer support, donor coordination, and the need for the strategy to be guided by scientific-based evidence were raised as critical requirements for progressing an A-P strategy.
- Building up A-P members' OSOCC capability to receive teams into their countries was raised as an important capacity building requirement.
- Questions were raised around the appropriate threshold for a sufficient level of A-P IEC capability – how will the region decide what the appropriate number of IEC teams is? And if the region increased national capacity significantly, what would be the impact on the need for IEC teams in future (e.g. would the need for IEC teams reduce)?
- Members noted that it can be more difficult to receive assistance than offer assistance. Important for countries to be selective on what assistance is accepted. The burden shouldn't be on the country that is receiving. Response needs to be needs-driven.

(2) IER - Should the region take on more responsibility for classification within the regional context?

Summary of Discussion:

- The current IER process is a heavy burden and the INSARAG community needs to consider how future management of IERs could be delivered to ensure minimum standards but reduce the burden on FCSS. This should be discussed at the ISG in Geneva in February 2016.
- The IER process is expensive, but allows common standards. We need to consider how the IER process can deliver and maintain standards in the most effective and efficient way (e.g. do all the standards need to be best tested and can the process be reduced from 36 hours – this would also reduce the expense

associated with the IER; could the frequency of the IER be reduced – maybe the current system of 5 years should be increased to 7 years where teams have deployed recently; pre—approving items on the checklist where teams have provided a comprehensive portfolio of evidence/up to standard – could scale back exercise both in time and resources; reducing the number of classifiers required)

- The group noted that a significant amount has been achieved due to centralization of management of the IEC/IERs in FCSS/Geneva. One of the strengths of INSARAG is its diversity, and this diversity/expertise/lessons/best practice is shared across the three regions via the central management/administration. It is important that the model for IER is consistent across all three regions.
- The IEC should remain global, but if an INSARAG national classification is developed it should be a regional process.
- The key objective is to maintain standards. Sustainability is also a key consideration - if the number of IEC teams continues to increase then there is a risk that no one will have capacity to undertake all the IEC/IERs.

(3) Consideration of extending the regional chairmanship to two years

Note from the report back session:

- Group 1 – no change to existing process
- Group 2 – no change to existing process
- Group 3 – no change to existing process
- Group 4 – no change to existing process

Australia noted that it would be helpful if the region considered a 3-5 year succession plan for Regional Chairs, rather than on an annual basis.