



## 2025 INSARAG Team Leader and Working Group Meeting Summary

Tunis, Tunisia

09-14 February 2025



**INSARAG**  
Preparedness Response

### Meeting Overview

The INSARAG Team Leaders and Working Groups Meetings convened in Tunis, Tunisia, bringing together 149 Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) experts from 45 countries to strengthen disaster response coordination. Hosted by the Tunisian National Office of Civil Protection, the event focused on governance reforms, operational improvements, and future strategic priorities.

Day 1 discussions focused on governance review updates, policy recommendations, and global INSARAG developments, including ICMS 3.0, and a discussion around the 2026 Guidelines.

During Day 2, Working Groups provided updates on training, information management, flood response, national capacity building, medical advancements, and quality assurance. Key discussions revolved around refining training methodologies, enhancing technology integration, strengthening disaster response coordination methodology, and addressing financial sustainability for INSARAG initiatives.

On Day 3, participants reflected on Working Group feedback, operational challenges, and priorities for improving preparedness, response tools, and training models. The meeting concluded with a strategic roadmap for strengthening governance, interoperability, and long-term disaster response capabilities, alongside member-state announcements on future events and initiatives.

The INSARAG Secretariat extends its appreciation to the Tunisian National Office of Civil Protection for hosting this important event and to all Working Group Chairs, Co-Chairs, Team Leaders, and INSARAG members who actively contributed to the discussions.

## TL Meeting Day 1

### *Session 1: Opening Remarks*

**Director General Abdismad Ben Jeddou** of the Tunisian National Office for Civil Protection formally welcomed all participants.

**INSARAG Global Lead a.i. Mr. Martijn Viersma** opened the 2025 Team Leader Meeting by emphasizing international cooperation in emergency response and thanking Tunisia for hosting. He highlighted the key contributions of Working Groups, upcoming classifications for new teams, and ongoing transitions within the Secretariat. He reaffirmed INSARAG's mission to save lives amid global challenges, urging continued collaboration and commitment to humanitarian efforts.

Participants gathered for a group photo.

### *Session 2: Tunisian Civil Protection & National Response System*

**The Office National de la Protection of Tunisia** presented an overview of the country's disaster response and emergency management system. It highlighted the structure, roles, and responsibilities of Tunisia's Civil Protection. The presentation covered the organization's key functions, including disaster preparedness, rescue operations, firefighting, and response to natural and man-made emergencies. Additionally, the presentation showcased Tunisia's risk profile, shaped by a combination of natural and human-made hazards.

### *Session 3: Meeting Agenda & Appointing of the Team Leaders Representative to the ISG*

**Mr. Belit Tasdemir**, of the Guidelines Review Group, introduced the agenda and it was adopted.

The Team Leader Representative to the INSARAG Steering Group Meeting profile was introduced. The representative should have proven experience within the INSARAG system, a strong reputation in the network and linkages with several Working Groups. The representative will serve a term of five years and should be available to attend INSARAG meetings from 2025-2030.

**Mr. Lucien Jaggi** introduced the position of Team Leader Representative to the ISG.

### *Session 4: INSARAG Global Updates & Key Developments*

**Mr. Lucien Jaggi**, of the INSARAG Secretariat, presented INSARAG Global Updates and Key Developments. The INSARAG Awards 2024 session highlighted key recognitions, including the UN Heroes Award for INSARAG and UNDAC, and the Special Achievement in GIS Award for the IMWG's innovative use of technology in disaster response.

The Global Updates session covered several important topics:

- The 2025 New Year Teleconference took place on 16 January in Bern, Switzerland, with the Chairman's Summary to be circulated soon.
- 2025 marks the 20th anniversary of the IEC/R Classification process, with Hungarian MoI National Directorate General for Disaster Management (MoI NDGDM) leading efforts to create a

commemorative publication. Team Leaders who have not yet received an email request for action are encouraged to speak with the Secretariat.

- The Secretariat acknowledged and thanked NED-01 for contributing to the funding need of ICMS. A sustainable funding approach was presented, to include each team purchasing an ICMS 5-year license. It was explained that the IMWG break-out session will allow for further discussion to reach consensus on the road to the ISG. Netherlands has generously funded ICMS through 2025, but the network must explore ways to ensure its sustainability moving forward.
- The INSARAG Secretariat is conducting a gender analysis to enhance gender equality and better support female USAR members. A survey has been sent to team and policy focal points. The Secretariat is available if questions arise.
- IEC/R projections for 2025-2026 include 3 INSARAG External Classifications (IEC) and 12 INSARAG External Reclassifications (IER) scheduled for this 2025.

The session also reviewed upcoming key events, including HNPW 2025 and the INSARAG Steering Group Meeting. INSARAG will host three exhibits at HNPW, and registration is open.

**Mr. Martijn Viersma**, INSARAG Global Lead a.i, presented the key outcomes from the Africa, Europe and Middle East and North Africa (AEME), Asia-Pacific (AP), and Americas Regional Meetings.

### ***Session 5: Governance Review – Policy Recommendations, Annex I***

**Mr. Belit Tasdemir** and **Mr. Patricio Fuentes** of the Guidelines Review Group presented a partial overview of the INSARAG Governance Review, Annex I. The review underscores the need for a strategic pivot to remain relevant in a humanitarian landscape increasingly shaped by climate-driven emergencies. Recommendations center on aligning INSARAG's structure with current needs, enhancing local response capacities, and prioritizing diversity and accountability. A proposed shift toward regional capacity-building aims to reduce reliance on international USAR teams by fostering self-sufficiency in disaster-prone areas.

As agreed at the 2024 INSARAG Steering Group Meeting, 20 recommendations under eight thematic areas were presented and consulted at all three regional meetings throughout 2024. Team Leaders were briefed on thematic areas and recommendations about which all three regions agreed.

All three regions were in agreement in two of the total eight thematic areas:

- **Leadership and Governance:** All regions agreed that Switzerland will remain as Global Chair, and that it was not necessary for a Regional Chair to act as a Deputy Global Chair. As such, the responsibilities of a Deputy Global Chair need not be defined.
- **Global Strategy 2026-2031:** All regions agreed that there should be a policy discussion on the position of INSARAG within the broader humanitarian context.

Of the remaining six thematic areas, regions reached partial agreement under three of the thematic areas below:

- **Accountability and Compliance:** The regions agreed that the network should apply "soft" penalties within the system.
- **Global Meeting:** All regions support the continuance of the INSARAG Global Meeting.
- **NGOs and Partners:** All regions agree that;
  - no changes need be made to the current agreement of policy focal points, operational focal points and team focal points from government agencies and NGO teams.
  - policy focal points should make the final decision on allowing NGOs to join the INSARAG network.
  - NGO team leaders/focal points should not be eligible to represent their region at the newly proposed Regional Operational Meetings.

There were mixed responses on the remaining recommendations under these three thematic areas, as well as on recommendations under the thematic areas of localization and classification.

### ***Session 6: Governance Review – Technical Recommendations, Annex II***

During Session 6 participants were divided into breakouts, facilitated by representatives of the WGs, to discuss the below Recommendations from Annex II of the Governance Review:

<b>Recommendation 10</b>	<i>Quarterly inductions by RFPs for new focal points – Policy, Operational, Team, WG Chairs / Vice Chairs, Regional Chairs / Vice Chairs. To include information on their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the network, expectations on participation and contribution etc.</i>
<b>Position</b>	Agreed to support this recommendation
<b>Recommendation 12</b>	<p><i>Add the points below to the PFP Terms of Reference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>That only PFPs can take decisions or endorse at INSARAG meetings where policy / financial impact decisions are required</i></li> <li>• <i>That they can delegate decision making authority where necessary</i></li> <li>• <i>PFPs need policy and / or financial decision-making authority, able to make decisions during meetings based on either their own direct authority or through prior ministerial/high level approval of budgets, USAR strategy etc</i></li> <li>• <i>That they should reinforce compliance of national governmental teams with the INSARAG Guidelines</i></li> </ul>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is to support this recommendation, noting that the financial mandate differs between Member States
<b>Recommendation 13</b>	<i>Change the gendered language within the ToR. See Vol 1, Section X.X which says 'his' team. Change to 'their' team.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is to support this recommendation.
<b>Recommendation 14</b>	<i>In addition, for PFP, OFP and TFP, the ToR should include mandatory attendance at an induction session for new focal points, led by OCHA ERS RFPs overseeing their respective regions.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position supports this recommendation.

<b>Recommendation 15</b>	<i>At least one annual meeting to be held between PFPs, OFPs and TFPs from both governmental and NGO teams on issues pertaining to USAR and the INSARAG network. This could include an induction session held back-to-back with regional meetings.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position supports this recommendation, but it will not be specified if this session is to be virtual or face-to-face.
<b>Recommendation 19</b>	<i>ToRs developed for the (Incoming) Regional Vice Chair, (Outgoing) Regional Vice Chair and Chair that clearly define and assign roles and responsibilities to underpin their work during their tenure.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that the recommendation should be included in Volume I Annex. This is to include that the outgoing Chair is to support the current Chair in preparing the regional work plan. The Chair is to present the regional work plan to the INSARAG network and set regional priorities for the year, in cooperation with the Incoming and Outgoing Chairs. A video or teleconference should be held at least once a year between the Troika and the INSARAG RFP.
<b>Recommendation 21</b>	<i>Develop a ToR for the role of RFP, clearly detailing the activities that they are able to undertake in support of the Troika.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that a paragraph will be included in Volume 1, Section 2.5.2, detailing these responsibilities.
<b>Recommendation 28</b>	<i>Amend the ToRs for PFPs and OFPs to include the need for improved communications around strategy / policy objectives and financial commitment to USAR. Ensure inclusion of this responsibility within the Focal Point inductions recommended elsewhere in this review.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that the INSARAG focal points: policy, operational or team, are expected to communicate between each other to advise and share information about strategy, policy objectives and the financial commitment to USAR on a national level.

<b>Recommendation 29</b>	<i>Amend the ToRs for OFPs and TFPs to include the need to inform TFPs on member states' policy / strategic objectives and financial commitment to USAR. Ensure inclusion of this responsibility within the Focal Point inductions recommended elsewhere in this review.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that the INSARAG focal points: policy, operational or team, are expected to communicate between each other to advise and share information about strategy, policy objectives and the financial commitment to USAR on a national level.
<b>Recommendation 30</b>	<i>All Team Leaders' meetings to be held in a hybrid environment and investment made in good online meeting facilitation. This could include real-time translation and transcription software. The Secretariat to ensure in advance of any events whether the proposed tools work in every country. Consider four meetings per year, with three online and one face-to-face.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that the recommendation is not supported, however it was agreed upon that the meeting should be broadcasted. There is a proposal to have two meetings a year – one online and one face-to-face.
<b>Recommendation 32</b>	<i>Consider holding face to face training for TFPs, Classifiers and Mentors back-to-back with Team Leader meetings.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is to support, when there is an opportunity and it is practical. This may vary by situation and training.
<b>Recommendation 33</b>	<i>Multi-language, online training for Team Leaders, Classifiers and Mentors to be developed to increase inclusivity and efficiency. This should be downloadable so as to operate in low-bandwidth contexts.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that products from the TWG will be delivered in English.
<b>Recommendation 34</b>	<i>The network to consider which training in general could be converted into online training to increase accessibility and to reduce travel.</i>

<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that this recommendation is supported by the TWG and will be delivered online when possible.
<b>Recommendation 35</b>	<i>Organisations proposing working group members to ensure that the candidate they propose has the skillsets identified by the working group Chair.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is to support this recommendation, in Volume I and a suggestion was made to have interviews held and a trial period.
<b>Recommendation 36</b>	<i>Organisations proposing candidates to be part of a working group need to ensure that the role is enshrined in their job description as an appropriate percentage of their day-to-day activities e.g. 5%, 10% etc.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that the wording of this recommendation should be changed, to more aptly reflect that the supporting organization and the candidate should be aware of the requirements of participating in a working group. The recommendation including the rewording was supported
<b>Recommendation 37</b>	<i>Creation of an observer status within working groups. This would facilitate learning and understanding across regions.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is to support this recommendation
<b>Recommendation 38</b>	<i>The Secretariat should enforce the INSARAG Guidelines on tenure of working group Co-Chairs, ensuring balanced representation.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is to support this recommendation, with the suggestion of a five-year tenure, at which point it would be considered if the tenure should be renewed.



<b>Recommendation 39</b>	<i>The number of working groups should be reduced to the same amount or fewer than the amount of RFPs within the Secretariat so that RFPs can support each working group effectively. Topics should be amalgamated as appropriate, for example through the reinstatement of the Operations Working Group which would be a catch all on technical issues. The Secretariat should ensure that new working groups contribute to the medium and long-term outcomes identified within the strategy. See Global Strategy Section below for further details.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that this recommendation is not supported.
<b>Recommendation 52</b>	<i>See the proposal under Network Structure Section to provide a balance of face-to-face and online meetings and invest funds saved through not travelling as much to meetings in securing support for quality online meeting facilitation support (human/software). All tools to be checked for availability in each country.</i>
<b>Position</b>	The agreed-upon position is that the recommendation is supported.

## [TL Meeting Day 2](#)

### **Session 7: Briefing from Working Groups**

The Working Group updates were conducted in an interactive round-robin format, excluding the Medical Working Group who presented in full group. The outcome of discussion is presented under Session 8:

#### **Training Working Group**

The Training Working Group presented new ideas on training based on recommendations in the AAR, including the USAR Coordination (UC) training to include more skill development in flexibility and adaptability, for new training sessions on assessment, search, and rescue (ASR) levels, training on how to address buildings with unknown victim information, and training logistics. A recent IEC/R leadership course was discussed along with ideas for a classifier course. New terminology for team status on VOSOCC and ICMS was discussed. Changes to Manual B were discussed such as: a new worksite ID naming structure to ensure flexibility of ICMS when working in multiple sectors; definition of the term sector and sub-sectors to mean geographical areas, the definition of the term work areas (when a team is assigned to an geographical area) and associated naming structure; how to name worksites with worksites; removal in Man B of reference to specific software and use ICMS as a general term to mean all software; figures that have been taken out that are now incorrect or deemed confusing; triage category C split into C1 (reported number of missing) and C2 (unknown number of missing); updated forms based on the AAR, feedback from teams in the TLM 2024, and strong collaboration with IMWG. During the discussion of triage categories, some participants voiced their experience that the current lettering on categories A and B causes confusion—because B-category buildings can be prioritized before A-category buildings. Additionally, the Training Working Group underscored the

importance of continuous capacity building, proposing the development of refresher courses and advanced training programs.

### Information Management Working Group

During the Information Management Working Groups brief, updates were presented on implementation of the Türkiye AAR. Simplification of the data collection, coordination layer flexibility, worksite numbering and alignment of terminology and methods of use regarding VOSOCC was presented as areas of improvement. The IMWG gave an overview of their key activities in the development of the ICMS 3.0. A preview of the ICMS 3.0 system was shown, along with the upcoming milestones of the progress. The group outlined plans for a structured transition from ICMS 2.0 to 3.0, with comprehensive training programs—both online and in-person—to ensure users adapt smoothly to the updated system. Furthermore, the IMWG gave an overview of needs and challenges, which concerns additional technical support and sustainable funding. The WG also presented guidelines recommendation which consisted of general recommendations and more specific recommendations for Volume II, Manual A, B and C. The presented developments and guidelines recommendations were supported by the Team Leaders. The main message from the Team Leaders during this session is that ICMS is an essential tool in the work of INSARAG teams: coordination saves lives!

### Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group

**Mr. Jeremy Stubbs**, Co-Chair of the Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group presented the increasing importance of localization and integrating technology into flood response operations, drawing on case studies from Australia, Brazil, Canada, and Libya. The WG highlighted the significant role that drones units play in enhancing safety and operational efficiency. The lessons identified included the importance of developing pre-deployment of flood resources, capacity building of national teams and making technology adaptations, and that protecting infrastructure saves lives as well. Furthermore, the WG presented planned activities. The directory is pending upload prior to ISG, and the technical reference note is planned to be sent out at the end of March 2025. Potential next steps for the WG are focusing on addressing the final phase of floods in recovery, exercising, assurance system, as well as technology and innovation including drones and community warning.

### National Capacity Building Working Group

The National Capacity Building Working Group presented its work plan and shared progress on its efforts to strengthen national response capacities. The WG presented on proposed updates to the IRNAP. Furthermore, the WG also proposed standardizing the duration of national exercises to 36 hours, mirroring the IEC Field Exercise standards. This alignment is intended to create consistency across evaluations and ensure that national teams are assessed under conditions like international deployments. The working group also emphasized the importance of host nation support and the processes surrounding the end of international operations. Draft guidance on these topics is under review, with a focus on ensuring that affected member states have clear frameworks for managing transitions during and after international deployments.

### Guidelines Review Working Group

**Mr. Martin Evers** and **Mr. John Cawcutt**, Co-Chairs of the Guidelines Review Group provided an update on the extensive consultations undertaken since 2023, which have helped shape the upcoming revisions. The group

stressed that the new guidelines are set to be presented in 2025, followed by endorsement at the ISG in 2026, with a six-month transition period for implementation. A major theme in the GRG's report was the alignment of guidelines with supporting documents, such as checklists and manuals, to avoid discrepancies.

### Quality Assurance IEC/R Working Group

The Quality Assurance IEC/R Working Group presented the general work of the group as well as the members of 2025. The presentation then proceeded to the progresses made of the QAWG, including the review and updated classifiers roster, review and validation of External IEC/R Review report recommendations, the revision of guidance for nominating classifiers and the WGs involvement in the two AARS following Türkiye and Syria earthquake. One of the key proposals was the restructuring of the existing checklist. The WG suggested splitting the checklist into two components: one for pre-greening exercises—allowing teams to prepare before actual field exercises—and a streamlined version for on-site evaluations. This division aims to reduce complexity during practical exercises and promote efficiency. Furthermore, the objectives and work plan for 2025 were presented. Finally, a break-out session was held to discuss questions regarding quality assurance.

### Medical Working Group

The Medical Working Group presented on outputs from its meeting in Q4 of 2024. Notably, the MWG presented its position statement “The delivery of emergency medical care to individuals entrapped in collapsed structures prior to and during extrication is critical to prevent physiological deterioration or death. Therefore, USAR medicine is an essential humanitarian activity.” This statement was endorsed during the 2024 INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting and represents an important milestone in the MWG's efforts to ensure USAR teams are training their USAR healthcare practitioners to enter the collapsed structure environment as soon as patient contact is made in order to provide lifesaving care. The MWG also presented on their review of the current Guidelines and provided suggested changes for the 2026 iteration. With regard to Volume I, the MWG recommends that when a country is requesting international USAR assistance, the INSARAG Secretariat provides that country with a brief description of the capabilities embedded within a USAR team, giving the country the opportunity to opt-out of accepting certain capabilities, e.g., drones, search K9s or medical care. This will then enable USAR team management to make an informed decision regarding the activation of their team.

The MWG also held a presentation on Crush Syndrome to raise awareness of its existence, which occurs frequently in victims trapped in collapsed structures, and contributes significantly to earthquake-related mortality. The emphasis of the presentation is to highlight the key role that rescuers play in its early identification and ensuring that USAR Healthcare Practitioners are actively engaged during the disentanglement and extrication process, thereby reducing the chances that a patient may succumb to crush syndrome.

## **TL Meeting Day 3**

### ***Session 8: Feedback from Day 2 Findings***

Session 8 covered the Working Groups feedback from Day 2, providing an in-depth review of the critical discussions and outcomes that shaped the gathering. The meeting emphasized strategic reflections on operational improvements, technological integration, and the importance of fostering collaboration across all working groups.

#### **Training Working Group**

A topic of discussion during the rotations centered on revising the VO status list. The group debated whether to replace the term "activated" with "deploying" to better reflect operational realities. Through broad consultations, a consensus emerged in favor of adopting "deploying". Another topic of discussion was regarding confusion of the lettering of the current triage categories. A consensus was not reached and the TWG committed to further consultations to reach a consensus.

#### **Information Management Working Group**

The IMWG Co-Chair initiated the session by addressing the logistical complexities encountered during repetitive sessions, while also highlighting the value of interactive feedback in fostering meaningful dialogue. A key discussion centered on the participation of unclassified and NGO teams during deployments. To facilitate their engagement, the WG proposed the issuance of temporary licenses, allowing these teams to contribute data to the ICMS during active missions, as previously implemented in Turkey. This approach ensures broader data collection while maintaining system integrity. Funding models were another point of discussion, with teams requesting alternatives to the existing one-time €7,500 fee. The Team Leaders supported the ICMS funding proposal, with details to be solidified, taking into account licenses during a disaster and spreading the payment across 5-years. The WG committed to exploring a more flexible annual payment system (€1,500 per year), aimed at easing financial burdens and encouraging participation from a wider array of teams. Teams expressed concerns about the operational complexity multiple mobile applications create. The IMWG proposed integrating all functionalities into the Quick Capture app, enabling users to access essential tools through a single interface, which the Team Leaders requested. Additionally, the Team Leaders supported the proposed changes to the Guidelines.

#### **Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group**

The Working Group discussed the value of sharing real-time data and best practices within the global flood response community. As part of their ongoing efforts, they are developing a global directory, expected to go live on VOSOCC, which will consolidate data on existing flood response capabilities across regions.

In addition, the Working Group reviewed international standards to identify commonalities and potential areas for harmonization. This initiative aims to streamline global flood response protocols and foster greater interoperability among international teams. A reference note was also developed to guide capacity-building efforts, particularly in countries focusing on flood awareness and land-based rescue operations.

## National Capacity Building Working Group

The NCBWG received broad support for its proposed updates, including extending the INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) period to 10 years, aligning it with best practices observed in other exercises. Discussions explored the composition of medium-sized teams, advocating for a more versatile structure that integrates both technical and search capabilities. While this change was widely supported at the national level, further deliberations will be needed to assess its implications for IEC and IER certifications.

## Quality Assurance IEC/R Working Group

The Quality Assurance IEC/R Working Group Co-Chair presented extensive feedback from their breakout sessions, underscoring the continued relevance and added value of the IEC and IER processes, particularly in maintaining interoperability and operational readiness. Participants emphasized the importance of critical peer reviews, which not only validate team capabilities but also offer constructive feedback in a collaborative environment. Financial sustainability emerged as a recurring challenge, with nearly all teams citing budget constraints as a major hurdle in maintaining readiness. The working group committed to exploring solutions that could offer more financial flexibility, including potentially guided budgeting frameworks. Discussions also covered the roles of classifiers and mentors, emphasizing the need for experience, impartiality, and strong communication skills. It was suggested that additional online training modules be developed to standardize classifier preparation across regions. Mentors, in particular, were recognized for their vital role in identifying gaps within teams and guiding their development through a nuanced understanding of operational dynamics.

## Guidelines Review Working Group

**Mr. John Cawcutt, Co-Chair of the GRG**, reinforced that the guidelines are community-driven documents, shaped by the collective input of INSARAG members rather than solely by the Secretariat. The GRG emphasized that while the main guidelines are updated every five years, supporting documents like guidance notes and checklists can be reviewed and revised annually, ensuring that operational protocols remain flexible and adaptive to evolving needs.

## Medical Working Group

The Medical Working Group reported successful collaboration with the Guidelines Review Group and the Quality Assurance team, ensuring that their recommendations were effectively integrated into the evolving guidelines. These updates focused on refining medical protocols in collapsed structures and confined spaces, enhancing the quality of emergency care provided in such environments.

Importantly, the proposed changes do not carry significant policy or financial implications, allowing for smooth integration into existing frameworks. The group encouraged all stakeholders to review the new guidelines once circulated and to provide feedback to ensure the highest standards of medical care in search and rescue operations.

## Conclusion

Session 8 reaffirmed the network's commitment to continuous improvement, technological integration, and collaborative decision-making. Strategic discussions addressed critical challenges, from funding flexibility and operational terminology to the integration of new technologies in disaster response.

The Session concluded with a call for all Working Groups to submit their final summaries and proposals, with an emphasis on maintaining open channels for ongoing feedback. Moving forward, the INSARAG network remains focused on refining response mechanisms, strengthening national capacities, and fostering innovation to meet the evolving demands of global search and rescue operations.

## **Session 9: Concerns and Priorities – Views of TLs**

Facilitated by **Mr. Lucien Jaggi**, Session 9 provided a dynamic forum for Team Leaders to voice their concerns, share priorities, and propose improvements for the INSARAG Network. The session adopted a rotational format, where participants, divided into three groups, discussed three core themes: Preparedness and Training, Response Tools and Systems, and Priorities for the INSARAG Secretariat & Working Groups. Each rotation allowed participants to delve into key issues, fostering dialogue on operational challenges, strategic gaps, and opportunities for strengthening the network.

### **1. Preparedness and Training**

Training and preparedness remain at the heart of INSARAG's operational effectiveness. However, with upcoming changes to manuals and checklists, TLs acknowledged the necessity of adapting their training plans accordingly.

One of the key recommendations was to establish an online directory on INSARAG.org, listing available training courses and facilities to foster better information sharing. Teams were encouraged to open their training sessions to international participants, strengthening cross-border collaboration. Additionally, facilitating access to trainers through GVA could enhance the overall quality and availability of instruction.

In terms of training delivery, there was a strong push toward hybrid models that blend in-person and online learning. Exploring innovative tools such as e-learning modules and virtual reality could make training more engaging and accessible. The idea of incorporating pre-course learning also gained traction, though some participants highlighted challenges in ensuring active engagement.

Standardization was another pressing topic. TLs emphasized the importance of increasing awareness of the TWG's standard training package and ensuring consistency in course structures. They stressed that courses should include multiple exercises and that modifications to core content should be avoided to maintain quality and reliability.

When it came to specific training needs, several areas were flagged as requiring attention. Structural engineers and assessment teams would benefit from specialized training on earthquake risk assessment. Meanwhile, refresher courses for UC and ICMS were deemed essential, along with disaster management and administration training tailored for TLs. An interesting suggestion was to hold online discussions before TL meetings to improve coordination.

To further enhance training quality, the Training of Trainers (ToT) courses were also under review. TLs suggested more rigorous quality control and closer collaboration between the TWG, Secretariat, and host nations. For teams that face travel constraints, the development of a best practices document was proposed. Additionally, participants underscored the importance of promoting VOSOCC courses and ensuring training for EREs remains as realistic as possible.

### **2. Response Tools and Systems**



Discussions on response tools and systems revealed both innovative practices and persistent challenges. Wide area assessment emerged as a significant concern, particularly for smaller Pacific nations struggling with capacity gaps. For example, Vanuatu's government building assessment remains incomplete due to limited resources. Some countries shared promising approaches: Australia employs Survey123 for real-time damage assessment, Canada controls the release of site photographs for wildfire rapid assessments, and Hungary integrates drones to identify hazards more efficiently.

The role of technology in improving response operations was widely recognized. Both VO and ICMS were acknowledged as crucial tools when applied effectively. Meanwhile, virtual reality (VR) is being tested in trainings by the Netherlands and the UK, offering immersive learning experiences. Spain showcased its use of GPS-tracked search dogs, enabling real-time mapping during search and rescue missions.

### 3. Priorities for the INSARAG Secretariat and Working Groups

The discussion on priorities for the INSARAG Secretariat and Working Groups (WGs) centered on improving coordination, streamlining procedures, and clarifying roles within the network. TLs expressed the need for more structured guidance on the functions and mandates of the Working Groups, emphasizing the importance of clearly defined objectives and expected outcomes.

A key topic was the necessity of aligning INSARAG's evolving strategy with the actual needs of USAR teams. Participants highlighted the need for better synergy between the Secretariat, the Working Groups, and operational teams to ensure the relevance of ongoing initiatives. In this regard, greater transparency in decision-making processes was also requested, with some TLs calling for more frequent updates on WG activities.

The importance of digital engagement was another key theme. With the increasing reliance on virtual platforms for coordination, participants stressed the need for more digital meetings to facilitate collaboration between TLs, WGs, and the Secretariat. The use of interactive online tools and repositories for knowledge sharing was also encouraged.

Looking ahead, TLs underscored the need for Working Groups to focus on practical solutions that address operational challenges. Proposals included developing targeted guidelines on emerging response needs, enhancing support for regional collaboration, and ensuring that best practices from exercises and deployments are systematically documented and disseminated.

### Session 10: Closing Session

The Session 9 Facilitators, together with the **Office National de la Protection Civile Tunisienne** and **Mr. Lucien Jaggi** from the INSARAG Secretariat, closed the final session of the INSARAG Team Leader Meeting.

The session opened with a recap of the key insights from the 'Concerns and Priorities' discussions. Team Leaders (TLs) reflected on the main challenges and opportunities identified throughout the meeting, emphasizing the need for:

- Strengthening interoperability and capacity-building through upcoming IEC/R events and regional exercises to enhance coordination among teams.

- Expanding thematic workshops to address emerging technologies, security protocols, and case study analyses, ensuring USAR teams remain adaptive and prepared for evolving challenges.
- Increasing engagement with NGOs and external partners to diversify expertise and reinforce a more comprehensive disaster response approach.
- Participants acknowledged the importance of maintaining an agile, innovative, and inclusive approach to USAR operations, while also reinforcing INSARAG's core principles of efficiency and coordination.

Member States were asked to share announcements, provided updates on upcoming events and initiatives:

- Germany: UCC ToT in September in Ulm, Germany.
- South Korea: Offer to host the 2026 Team Leader's Meeting.
- Algeria: Proposed a potential IRNAP leadership course, date to be determined.
- Hungary: Requested videos and photos from IER journeys for documentation purposes.
- The Americas: announced the ERE scheduled to take place in Brazil, as well as the 2026 Global Meeting, to be held back-to-back with Working Groups meetings.
- Czech Republic: USAR dog handlers exercise planned for May.
- TL Representative to ISG: **Mr. Camille Michel** (USAR.NL) has been appointed. TL representatives are encouraged to play a more active role in TLM planning, with additional digital meetings throughout the year to ensure stronger engagement.

A brief survey was conducted during the session to gauge participant satisfaction with the meeting's structure and content. Feedback reflected a generally positive reception, with participants particularly valuing the open forums and interactive breakout sessions. However, recommendations were made to better balance breakout and plenary sessions and to streamline schedules to reduce participant fatigue.

Session 10 concluded the INSARAG Team Leader Meeting by consolidating the key concerns, priorities, and innovative ideas raised throughout the event. The discussions underscored the importance of fostering collaboration, promoting continuous improvement, and embracing emerging technologies within the INSARAG network.

Participants left with a clear call to action: to contribute actively to working groups, advocate for operational enhancements, and maintain the network's commitment to saving lives through coordinated, efficient, and inclusive disaster response.

The meeting not only reinforced INSARAG's foundational principles but also set a forward-thinking agenda focused on agility, innovation, and community-driven growth.