

Overview:

The XXIII Meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group and the XI UNDAC Regional Consultative Meeting of the Americas was held in Quito, Ecuador, from 9-11 December 2024. The meeting was organized by the National Secretariat for Risk Management of Ecuador (SNGR) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It was attended by representatives from Argentina (virtually), Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, and the United States of America, as well as by the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPRENAC) and the French Departments of French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique. They were accompanied by the Operational Focal Point of France, who is also a mentor to the two USAR teams of Ecuador under the IEC process.¹

The main regional and global activities of INSARAG and UNDAC were presented. Lessons learned from UNDAC missions were discussed, along with strategic issues related to the UNDAC mechanism. Presentations covered topics aligned with the four strategic objectives of the INSARAG Regional Plan in the Americas 2024. The priority recommendations from the INSARAG Governance Review were reviewed and consulted. Additionally, the guidelines for the regional work plans of INSARAG and UNDAC were agreed upon.²

In 2025, El Salvador assumed the role of incoming Chair, Brazil will serve as the Regional Chair, and Ecuador will hold the position of outgoing Chair. Furthermore, Brazil committed to hosting the INSARAG Global Meeting in 2026.



Opening Ceremony

Ambassador Dominik Stillhart, Head of Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), as well as Global Chair of INSARAG, welcomed the

¹ See List of Participants: [Annex 1](#).

² See Agenda: [Annex 2](#) and [Presentations](#):

members of the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas and all event participants. He expressed gratitude to the government of Ecuador and the INSARAG Secretariat for organizing the meeting. He emphasized that the joint INSARAG and UNDAC meeting was no coincidence, highlighting that the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria the previous year served as a stark reminder of the need for coordinated action. He stressed the importance of using shared instruments and ensuring a joint preparedness process to effectively respond to future emergencies.

Ambassador Stillhart underscored that the meeting provided an opportunity to translate the outcomes of the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting into actionable steps while incorporating key lessons from 2024 to shape strategies for 2025. He also highlighted the significance of this joint platform for INSARAG and UNDAC, emphasizing that, as humanitarians, we share a collective responsibility to enhance coordination and preparedness. Strengthening this alignment, he noted, would ensure a more effective response to future challenges. He pointed out that the next two days would be crucial in helping both networks remain true to their objectives – being proactive, adaptable, and inclusive in an evolving risk landscape.

Ambassador Stillhart highlighted three key areas to guide the focus of the discussions:

1. **Diversity:** Both INSARAG and UNDAC are stronger when they embrace inclusivity. Reflecting diversity within and across regions enables a more effective response to region-specific risks while contributing to global resilience. This meeting serves as an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, strengthen partnerships, and foster solidarity within our networks.
2. **Emerging Challenges:** Climate change has amplified existing threats and created new risks. He gave the example of Hurricane Beryl in July, which hit the Caribbean, and highlighted the flexibility and strength demonstrated by UNDAC teams in mobilizing in the region and providing critical support. He stressed the importance of putting flood response on the agenda as there is increasing frequency and intensity due to climate change.
3. **Practical Standards:** While standards are essential for both INSARAG and UNDAC, they must also be realistic and adaptable. As methodologies are revised, it is crucial to maintain a balance that ensures they remain both achievable and relevant within the operational context.

Ambassador Stillhart encouraged all representatives to actively participate, share ideas, and work toward consensus. He expressed gratitude for the participants' commitment and unwavering dedication, acknowledged OCHA's invaluable support to the INSARAG Secretariat, and thanked the Government of Ecuador for its support.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham, Head of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean at OCHA, welcomed Minister Jorge Carrillo, Mr. Mateo Perroni, and the attending representatives, acknowledging their experience and inviting them to engage in collective reflection within a framework of trust. She emphasized the importance of this meeting as an opportunity to strengthen both the INSARAG network and the UNDAC mechanism, as well as to enhance collaboration for more effective, coordinated humanitarian efforts in support of vulnerable communities. She noted that the current global landscape is increasingly complex – not only due to disasters but also because of social challenges and violence arising from various causes. She highlighted that INSARAG and UNDAC serve as platforms for developing technical proposals with short-, medium-, and long-term perspectives. In this context, she stressed that the link between humanitarian work, sustainable development, and peace is becoming ever more necessary and urgent.

Ms. Cheatham emphasized that OCHA's work aligns with the mandate of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to strengthen coordination among all humanitarian actors, ensuring the most effective and

efficient support for affected populations. This coordination, led by the international community, is carried out in partnership with governments to assist people in humanitarian need. In this context, OCHA is responsible for serving as the INSARAG Secretariat, supporting its governance structures, and managing the UNDAC system with the participation of member states and contributing organizations. Both mechanisms play a crucial role in first response efforts.

Mr. Mateo Perroni, Resident Coordinator a.i. of the United Nations System in Ecuador and Resident Representative of the World Food Programme, welcomed Minister Jorge Carrillo and his team, acknowledging Ecuador's efforts in organizing the meeting. He also welcomed Ms. Shelley Cheatham, recognizing OCHA's leadership and contributions in the region, as well as the Regional Chairmanship and all attending representatives. He emphasized Ecuador's commitment to assuming the Chair and its efforts in promoting disaster preparedness and response.

In particular, he commended the organization of the simulation exercise, noting that it had strengthened national capacities and improved coordination with international entities. He highlighted the current global context, marked by the increasing occurrence of disasters, the effects of climate change, and humanitarian crises, all of which demand more coordinated and efficient action. He underscored that this meeting serves as an invaluable opportunity to consolidate regional response capacities and define joint strategies to address both regional and global challenges.

Additionally, he emphasized the importance of the meeting's agenda, including the opportunity to integrate the priorities of INSARAG and UNDAC. He expressed gratitude to the delegations, teams, and strategic partners for their participation and collaboration. In closing, he wished all participants success in their discussions and reiterated the United Nations System's commitment to continued collaboration in building a safer and more resilient future.

Minister Jorge Carrillo, National Secretary of Risk Management, INSARAG Policy Focal Point, and UNDAC Focal Point of Ecuador, as well as Chair of the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas, welcomed the participants of the opening ceremony and the representatives present, extending greetings on behalf of President Daniel Noboa. He also acknowledged the team of the National Secretariat of Risk Management.

He emphasized that this meeting represents a convergence of efforts and knowledge aimed at strengthening response capacities in the region. By assuming the responsibility of chairing the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship for the Americas, Ecuador reaffirmed its commitment to promoting international cooperation, enhancing technical capacities, and fostering innovation in risk management.

Minister Carrillo highlighted that this meeting does not only provide an opportunity to assess the achievements made thus far but also to prioritize key aspects to establish the work plan for 2025. He proudly noted Ecuador's achievement in becoming the fourth country in the region and the ninth in the world to receive the IRNAP certification. This accomplishment is the result of joint efforts between national and international institutions and demonstrates Ecuador's commitment to operational excellence in urban search and rescue. It also ensures that future generations of rescuers operate under international standards, safeguarding the lives and dignity of people in emergency situations. For Ecuador, leading this meeting not only signifies the conclusion of a cycle in the Chairmanship but also reflects the country's firm commitment to knowledge dissemination, capacity-building, and support for strategic initiatives, such as the qualification processes for two Ecuadorian teams from Quito and Guayaquil. Regarding UNDAC, Minister Carrillo emphasized the opportunity to contribute national experts to emergency response missions both within and outside the region. He noted that this meeting would include updates on the results of recent missions and provide a forum for discussing strategic issues related to the mechanism. He expressed gratitude to OCHA for its invaluable support through the Regional Focal Point for the Americas, as well as to Argentina and Brazil. Finally, he encouraged all participants to continue

advancing with the shared commitment to building a safer, more resilient, and inclusive region.

Presentation of the Participants and Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. Erika Poveda, Director of International Strategies and Risk Reduction at the National Secretariat of Risk Management of Ecuador, continued the session and introduced **Ms. Ana María Rebaza**, INSARAG and UNDAC Regional Focal Point for the Americas at OCHA. Ms. Rebaza presented the meeting's agenda and the participation of countries and organizations, expressing gratitude for the commitment of the representatives present.

Session 1: Regional and Global INSARAG and UNDAC Reports

INSARAG Regional and Global Activities Report 2024

Ms. Andrea Hermenejildo, National Undersecretary of Risk Management of Ecuador, assumed moderation and introduced the session. She then gave the floor to **Ms. Ana María Rebaza**, who presented the main global and regional activities of INSARAG in 2024, beginning with the meeting of USAR Team Leaders and the Working Groups. This meeting, organized by the government of Brazil, in collaboration with OCHA, was followed by a review of the 2024 New Year's Teleconference.

Ms. Rebaza provided a brief report on the 2024 INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting, which took place during the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW) in Geneva. She noted that the event included meetings between Member States, the INSARAG Secretary and the UNDAC Global Lead. She highlighted the recognition of Ambassador Manuel Bessler and extended a warm welcome to Ambassador Dominik Stillhart as Global Chair of INSARAG. She also reported that the INSARAG Governance Review was accepted, and an agreement was made to consult prioritized recommendations in the INSARAG Regional Groups. Finally, she presented the comprehensive After-Action Review Report of the Türkiye and Syria response.

She summarized the main points approved for the INSARAG Working Groups, including:

1. Guidelines Review Group: The launch of the new guidelines in 2026.
2. Information Management Working Group: Financial resources are needed for the operation of ICMS version 3.0, which is currently being developed.
3. Medical Working Group: The treatment of crush syndrome has been approved for USAR operations.
4. IEC/R Quality Assurance Working Group: An increased number of classifiers were selected.
5. Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group: A voluntary directory for flood response will be created.
6. National Capacity Building Working Group: A two-year work plan, with a primary focus in 2025 on revising Handbook A within the framework of the INSARAG guidelines revision.
7. Training Working Group: The convening of more members, with the participation of three experts per region.

Ms. Rebaza reported on the INSARAG Classification and Reclassification processes. In 2024, eight USAR teams were reclassified, and one USAR team from Azerbaijan was classified, bringing the total number of classified USAR teams globally to 58. She also announced that in 2025, an IEC/R Leadership Course will be held, noting that only 9% of the classifiers are women. Additionally, she provided an update on the IEC/IER processes for 2025. Ms. Rebaza reported on several courses held in 2024, including the Regional

Earthquake Response Exercises and the MODEX organized by the European Commission in coordination with UNDAC and the EMT mechanism. She also highlighted the IRNAP Leadership course in the Asia Pacific, which featured a significant methodological contribution from the Americas region.

She also mentioned the dates of key global activities in 2025:

- New Year's Teleconference: 16 January 2025.
- IEC/R Leadership Course: 13-17 January 2025.
- USAR Team Leaders and Working Group Meetings: 9-14 February 2025.
- HNPW in Geneva: 24-28 March 2025.
- ISG during the HNPW: 25 March 2025.

Ms. Rebaza then presented the progress related to the INSARAG 2024 Regional Work Plan.

Strategic Objective 01 – Quality Standards:

She provided an update on the reclassification of the USA-02 team from the United States and the CHI-01 team from Chile. Additionally, she noted that the Colombian team's reclassification process is scheduled for 2026. Furthermore, she highlighted that two USAR teams from Ecuador have completed their applications to begin the classification process.

Strategic Objective 02 – Localization:

Ms. Rebaza emphasized the need to review the GTA/GTR roster. She also discussed the IRNAP processes in Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, which are currently facing challenges in advancing. While the planned exchange activity on IRNAP processes did not take place, she pointed out that there is still strong interest in organizing it. The IRNAP training package was delivered to the National Capacity Building Working Group, with regional experts from Brazil and Chile contributing to the facilitation. In addition, training on the use of the ICMS was provided through online sessions and during the ERE in Ecuador in 2025. She mentioned that the First Responder Course was not held this year and that a workshop on USAR good practices is still pending.

Strategic Objective 03 – Flexible Response:

Ms. Rebaza noted the region's participation in the Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group, although no progress was made in forming a Regional Group for Search and Rescue in Flood Response.

Strategic Objective 04 – Partnerships:

Ms. Rebaza reported on ongoing coordination with CEPREDENAC for future activities once the project with SDC concludes. She also highlighted the collaboration with the Organization of American Firefighters (OBA) in organizing a webinar on USAR and Gender. Additionally, she mentioned the active participation of PAHO/WHO in the International ERE Ecuador 2024. However, she noted that the terms of reference for the community of practice between the Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) and the medical component of USAR teams have not yet been finalized. Lastly, she shared that no steps have been taken concerning the alliance with CAPRADE.

Minister José Solla, General Coordinator of Humanitarian Cooperation, Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, INSARAG Diplomatic Policy Focal Point and UNDAC Focal Point of Brazil, called for greater representation of the region to actively participate in the Flood Response Working Group.

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya, Director General of Civil Protection Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, INSARAG Policy Focal Point, and UNDAC Focal Point of El Salvador, highlighted that Costa Rica experienced severe flooding this year, prompting El Salvador to develop a response operations plan to support the emergency. He inquired about the requirements for participation in the Working Group. Additionally, he reported that El Salvador has trained personnel in flood response, certified under the CORPPI methodology, and reiterated the country's strong interest in joining the working group.

Minister Jorge Carrillo emphasized the importance of addressing landslide response as well. He underscored the significance of this issue within the broader context of risk management and praised the exceptional efforts of the Quito Firefighters during the landslide emergency in Ecuador in 2024, which tragically resulted in the loss of 16 lives.

UNDAC Regional and Global Activities Report 2024

Ms. Ana María Rebaza reported on the most relevant activities carried out during the year. She began by highlighting the Evaluation and Analysis Course, which was conducted in Panama for the first time at a regional level. She also reported on the Course for Operational Partners, delivered in Luxembourg, as well as the three UNDAC Refresher Courses held in Belgium, China, and Italy. Additionally, she mentioned the course for Subregional Response Teams, organized in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community Emergency (SADC).

She further emphasized the two EUCPM/UNDAC Leaders' Workshops, along with both the UNDAC Induction Course and the UNDAC Advisory Consultative Meeting, which were held in Geneva, Switzerland.

Ms. Rebaza also noted the deployment of three UNDAC missions: one in Yemen, which complemented an environmental emergency mission, and two in response to Hurricane Beryl—one to Jamaica and another to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada. She reported on the publication of the new UNDAC 2024 Manual and the launch of the new website. Finally, she made a special mention of the "We the Peoples" recognition, awarded by the United Nations Foundation in honor of the humanitarian work carried out by UNDAC and INSARAG.

• Plenary Discussion

Minister José Solla pointed out that no UNDAC Induction Course was held in the region, which presents a challenge. He emphasized the need for this course to be more accessible to the region. He conveyed Brazil's and the region's strong interest in increasing participation to submit candidacies; however, it does not appear that the region is being prioritized. He expressed hope that an opportunity to hold an Induction Course in the region would arise in the future.

Given the frequency of emergencies in the region, he stressed the importance of prioritizing regional participation to take on a more active role in UNDAC missions. He highlighted the severe flooding in Brazil, which affected a vast area spanning 500 municipalities, and expressed gratitude to **Mr. Rogerio Mobilia Silva**, an UNDAC member of OCHA, for his crucial support during that emergency. With hydrometeorological events becoming increasingly severe, he underscored the urgent need for Geneva to give greater consideration to the region.

Mr. Diego Caruezo, INSARAG Chile Operational Focal Point, reinforced Brazil's statement, indicating that there has not been an UNDAC induction course in the Americas since 2022. He highlighted Chile's commitment to international activities and the importance of maintaining continuous training in the region. However, he mentioned that, despite the region's commitment, training opportunities are not enough offered in the region, perceiving little reciprocity.

Mr. Paúl René Ugarte, INSARAG Policy Focal Point and UNDAC Focal Point of Guatemala, pointed out that another issue to include is forest fires. He indicated that it is essential to standardize the response to these events using the INSARAG and UNDAC methodology to ensure a more coordinated and efficient response to these disasters. Events are becoming more and more complex.

Minister José Solla pointed out that the Search and Rescue in Floods Response Working Group is primarily focused on floods. However, he noted that it also presents an opportunity to address other types of disasters in the future, with forest fires being the second major concern after floods. That said, he emphasized that, at this time, all efforts must be directed toward addressing the issue of floods.

Lieutenant Colonel Esteban Cárdenas, Chief of the Quito Metropolitan Fire Department, pointed out that INSARAG and UNDAC have addressed the issue of earthquakes. He noted that, due to climate change, INSARAG is now also focusing on floods as part of the Flexible Response approach. In the Andean countries, landslides caused by heavy rainfall are a major concern, as they lead to structural collapses and trapped individuals. He also highlighted the shortage of classifiers in the region and emphasized the need to bring courses and training to enhance capacities in both UNDAC and INSARAG. Additionally, he stressed the importance of addressing language barriers in these efforts.

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya emphasized, as noted during the 2023 regional meeting, the importance of synergizing with key projects such as USAID/BHA to strengthen disaster response preparedness. He noted that progress could be made in standardizing response efforts through methodologies such as Incident Command, emergency operations management, and control systems. He acknowledged that the region has made significant progress in response preparedness and suggested that training programs could be expanded to include search and rescue teams beyond USAR, as well as emergency response management based on UNDAC principles.

Mr. Diego Caruezo highlighted that the Organization of American Firefighters (OBA) is working internally to develop certified and classified equipment for wildfire response. While he clarified that this effort is not part of INSARAG's guidelines, he emphasized that wildfires are an increasingly critical issue affecting the region. He stressed the importance of collaborating with OBA to address these emergencies, which have a direct impact on many countries in the region.

Session 2: UNDAC Missions and Lessons Learned

Ms. Silvia Ballén, UNDAC Focal Point for Colombia, led the session on lessons learned from two missions conducted in response to emergencies caused by Hurricane Beryl.

UNDAC Mission for Hurricane Beryl in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada

Mr. Rogerio Mobilia Silva, Deputy Head of OCHA's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, who led this mission, presented the context of the hurricane season in the region. It was a season with several storms and hurricanes above the historical average. He noted that Hurricane Beryl was the first hurricane in history that evolved from a Category 4 hurricane in June to a Category 5 hurricane in July. It took Beryl several days to cross the Caribbean.

He stressed that the two islands concerned belonged to two different countries and were not the main islands of those countries. The laws, logistics and conditions were different, which made the challenges even greater. The impact was severe, without water, energy, with almost total damage to infrastructure. The population moved to other islands, which made it more difficult to identify the target population. Therefore, there were many challenges for OCHA and CDEMA. Transportation and logistics on small islands in the Caribbean are not only difficult but very expensive. Total self-sufficiency was indispensable. IHP provided essential logistical support to install a workspace in the affected area. At the beginning, not all the necessary information was available, and the operational partners had to mobilize with little information. The mobilization was large and complex to manage.

Mr. Mobilia Silva stressed that the internal organization of the UNDAC team took a few days because the conditions were very difficult. UNDAC members arrived in Barbados and from Barbados organized how to get to the two affected islands, Grand Union (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) and Carriacou (Grenada). They were able to have an OSOCC in Carriacou, but in Grand Union it could not be installed because there was a high risk of fires. Access to drinking water, energy, telecommunications and infrastructure for stay and work was difficult. One of the few humanitarian partners present was Samaritan's Purse, which collaborated with UNDAC. The communication that could be established was satellite, but that was problematic. Coordination with the government was also difficult due to logistical limitations.

Information management was highlighted as a fundamental aspect and is always challenging due to too little or too much unstructured information. In this sense, he emphasized that it is necessary to train teams in data collection, and to work with secondary information, with inaccuracies at the beginning and work based on "good enough" information to start planning. Having the information from the partners takes more time than one thinks.

For the humanitarian needs assessment there was a previous work to define the methodology. But sometimes progress is lost due to a change of authorities and a lot of time is lost. It is necessary to work on preparation permanently. It is essential to share the results of rapid assessments by all humanitarian actors. There was work on environmental issues by a team from the OCHA-UNEP Joint Environment Unit and UNDAC, which supported issues of waste management, mangrove issues, sea line, management of chemical elements, among others.

The UNDAC mission supported OCHA's core functions, for example for the planning of the CERF proposal. CERF intervention helped to improve shelter conditions, access to water, health services, food support, kits for home repairs, recovery of fishing activities. They worked with the communities, technical items were left for damage assessments, dashboards, automated data collection, experience in coordination. The base camp was left for working place and accommodation donated by the Luxembourg government.

There are still unmet humanitarian needs; however, fortunately, no further events impacted these countries during the hurricane season. Preparedness efforts, including simulation exercises, remain crucial. It is also important to continue strengthening civil-military coordination and collaboration with the private sector. Finally, he highlighted the growing impact of disasters and the increasing number of affected people, despite the challenge of more limited resources.

UNDAC Mission for Hurricane Beryl in Jamaica

Mr. Gianni Morelli, Humanitarian Affairs Officer of OCHA's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), who led the UNDAC mission in Jamaica, detailed the impact that Hurricane Beryl had on Jamaica, especially on the infrastructure. He clarified that the hurricane reached category 4 in Jamaica and the trajectory deviated to the south and there was a smaller impact than expected. However, one of the biggest challenges was the management of information on impact.

Jamaica did not request support from CDEMA. It has a structured system of civil protection, but an interface with the United Nations was needed. The UNDAC mobilization was carried out under the premise of "do not regret", in the sense of making a deployment based on the scenario of greatest risk. An expert from UNDSS was mobilized for the first time. It became clear that more training of potential UNDSS members is needed to be better attuned to the emergency context. The capacities were greater than those required, and the logistics were very expensive. Four members were relocated to the mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada.

Operational partners included mapping, telecommunications, humanitarian needs assessment and logistics capabilities. An expert in environmental risk assessment was also part of the mission. The

mission reduced the extension of the deployment time to two weeks. It focused on: planning of the CERF proposal with the United Nations System, the analysis of humanitarian needs (MIRA report), support to the national authority to improve information management, cartographic products, response and recovery work plan.

Understanding that each emergency is unique and carries unique challenges, he proposed some lessons learned. Better coordination is required prior to deployment with both the United Nations and the government to do a more effective job from the beginning by making the UNDAC mechanism better known. He pointed out that the mission was mainly concentrated in the capital, which he considered a strategic error, and it was possible to have a greater presence on the ground, allowing a more effective capture of information and a better evaluation. He stressed the importance of being aware of cultural sensitivity and differences in response systems in each country. He indicated that in this case, there was not an adequate connection between Jamaica and CDEMA. It is also important to have a greater knowledge of the national system. Finally, he stressed that it is important to connect more with the affected communities.

- **Plenary Discussion**

Ms. Silvia Ballén collected some key points: the progressive adaptation of the action plan, logistical considerations in difficult contexts, strengthening information management, sharing rapid assessments, creating the flow of information quickly, including environmental and waste management issues, communication with the social partners, and good communication of the UNDAC mechanism not only with the United Nations entities but also with the United Nations entities. Governments.

Minister José Solla recognized the work of UNDAC. He highlighted the important support received from Brazil during the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, expressing his gratitude to OCHA and UNDAC for the support provided by Mr. Rogerio Mobilia Silva, to the countries that provided their bilateral support, and to IDB, ECLAC and the World Bank to carry out a DALA study (Assessment of Loss and Damage for Recovery). He reported that Brazil is participating in a CERF meeting to participate as a donor country. The United States, Ecuador and Brazil are on the CERF advisory board. He pointed out that it is important to participate in the CERF mechanism, which is essential to support emergencies in our countries.

Mr. Rogerio Mobilia noted that the Hurricane Beryl missions did not include national members from the region because they were not available or fluent in the English language. Besides, we need greater inclusion of diversity in the response, promoting the participation of women in the UNDAC and INSARAG mechanisms, working with the private sector, and encouraged the countries of the region to develop technical and logistical support capacities, to have a greater familiarization of the UNDAC mechanism so that countries can better use the role of OCHA and UNDAC.

Session 3: UNDAC Strategic Themes

UNDAC roster management and training processes

Mr. Lucien Jaggi, INSARAG and UNDAC Regional Focal Point, highlighted the importance of having the joint regional meeting INSARAG and UNDAC as a working model. He recalled that the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) 2025 was recently launched by OCHA, presenting the main operations that are being developed at the global level and indicating the needs for care and financing. The three key factors driving humanitarian need are: conflict, the global climate emergency, and economic factors. The request is for 47.5 billion dollars to serve more than 190 million people in the world, but there is less than 2% financing now.

Regarding the UNDAC mechanism, he noted that OCHA's funding is limited, with a significant portion of resources coming from the mission accounts of member countries. However, these mission accounts are declining, particularly in Europe. While there are 45 active national UNDAC members in the region, only 20 are currently deployable due to compliance requirements. He emphasized the importance of UNDAC Focal Points in monitoring the compliance status of their UNDAC members.

Globally, there are an average of 9 missions per year. This year it was below average. He indicated that as UNDAC Focal Points, they are better informed of how UNDAC works and can have more clarity on when to request a UNDAC mission. The roster is made up of 54% national UNDAC members, and 38% UNDAC OCHA members.

Several UNDAC members have been trained but have never deployed, which is not an efficient investment. He noted that 112 UNDAC members who completed induction courses between 2018 and 2022 have never participated in a mission. This issue is being monitored and has led to a reduction in the roster. The current criterion requires a global total of 150 active national UNDAC members, meaning the roster will be reduced by half to ensure a more efficient system. Moving forward, a stricter process will be implemented regarding availability and compliance with requirements, and UNDAC members who do not demonstrate availability, and commitment will be removed from the roster.

At the national level, another key commitment is the mission account, which facilitates the financing of the UNDAC mechanism. He urged countries to open or replenish their mission accounts and emphasized the importance of prioritizing missions over other activities when utilizing these funds. Regarding UNDAC's 2023-2026 Strategic Objectives, he highlighted that, in addition to strengthening the UNDAC roster, regionalization and localization are key priorities to enhance support for rapid response teams using the UNDAC methodology. He also pointed out that other services are available to countries, including the Joint Environmental Unit for environmental emergencies, the Civil-Military Coordination Unit, and additional specialized response services.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza raised a question regarding what is needed for the region to be chosen as the host for the UNDAC courses. What are the requirements, and the level of commitment needed by the countries of the region to be considered for their candidacy to organize these courses.

Mr. Lucien Jaggi responded that there are efficiency considerations for the conduct of the courses. The reduction of the roster implies a reduction of courses. There will only be one induction course and 2 UNDAC refresher courses in 2025. Courses with specific topics could be proposed if the need is identified and the resources are located. Another option is to hold online courses or webinars. A Training of Trainers course will also be held to increase capacities in the regions in February in Doha, Qatar. Regional peer-to-peer courses can also be held with the support of OCHA in co-facilitation but mainly led by the countries.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham raised the UNDAC induction courses to train UNDAC members and to familiarize government authorities with the UNDAC mechanism, ensuring that they understand how this response system works to use it. Consideration should be given to how else members and governments can be made familiar with UNDAC and its added value. We are seeing that there is not as much demand for UNDAC deployments, which may be due to political issues and the UNDAC mechanism should be made known as something that serves countries.

Minister Jorge Carrillo pointed out that UNDAC should be more linked to the country's risk management entities, instead of depending on individual technicians, taking into account that people can change positions, and this leaves the institution without a strong link with the UNDAC mechanism.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza took up the information from the subregional course held in South Africa for the familiarization of rapid response teams, which she considered a useful model for the region. She pointed out that, although the reduction of the roster has been requested, the UNDAC methodology is valid to

strengthen regional capacities to channel interest in the UNDAC theme. While there will not be a UNDAC induction course this year in the region, it would be possible to organize a course similar to the one in South Africa to familiarize them with the methodology and reinforce their knowledge and preparation.

Mr. Luis Amaya shared the experience of applying the methodology in El Salvador. When evaluating emergency management at the departmental and municipal levels, it was seen that there was not enough installed capacity in emergency management, it was seen that the UNDAC methodology could be applied. This led to the creation of five emergency intervention teams, one of those specialized in logistics management for humanitarian assistance, another Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis team, another Emergency Operations Control Team that enable a Municipal or Departmental Crisis Room to manage the emergency where there are no emergency management structures. A fourth piece of equipment has to do with Telecommunications. This methodology has worked very well in recent emergencies.

Minister José Solla pointed out that he can understand the need to rationalize the UNDAC roster to make it more effective. But in Brazil, UNDAC members need to be renewed. In INSARAG, the region of the Americas has little presence in the Working Groups. In UNDAC there is a greater number of national members and yet the number must be reduced. He stated that this region wants to collaborate, and it is necessary to give it support and the next request is considered.

Ms. Silvia Ballén noted that, in the Americas region, many countries do not have the resources to finance their UNDAC members, despite having the desire to help. In this regard, she suggested that, instead of cutting the number of members, the reason behind this situation should be analyzed.

Mr. César Sierra, INSARAG Operational Focal Point of Peru, pointed out that the UNDAC methodology was also used in Peru and a similar structure was created to strengthen disaster response capacity. He highlighted the region's interest in participating as members of UNDAC and requested that the roster not be reduced, but rather to define what the representativeness of UNDAC means in the region.

Mr. Lucien Jaggi emphasized that UNDAC is not just a roster of members but also a methodology that integrates many global-level elements, with UNDAC Focal Points serving as ambassadors of this mechanism. Regarding the reduction of the roster, he highlighted the importance of recognizing that OCHA's resources are limited for carrying out activities, making efficiency a key priority. However, he noted that UNDAC member countries can take the lead in implementing activities using the UNDAC methodology, with OCHA providing support but ensuring a country-led approach. Another opportunity lies in deploying UNDAC members to various regional exercises and activities. He also commended the Americas as a strong region, pointing out that it is the only region that holds a joint meeting between UNDAC and INSARAG.

Regarding the upcoming UNDAC Advisory meeting in Geneva this March, remote participation may also be possible. He shared additional points on the lessons learned from the response to the earthquake in Turkey. UNDAC is expected to work closely with other INSARAG mechanisms, such as the Reception and Departure Centre (RDC), the USAR Coordination Cell (UCC), and the Emergency Medical Team (EMT) mechanism. Concerning the deployment of UNDAC members, he emphasized that the lack of country funding has never been a reason not to deploy a member, as OCHA can seek funding from another donor country. The priority is always to respond to alerts. He also reminded that countries can request environmental missions through the Joint Environmental Unit (JEU), which is part of OCHA and UNEP. In "non-permissive" settings, where access issues are linked to conflict, such as in Haiti, national UNDAC members will not be deployed due to staff safety concerns. The UNDAC methodology is available to countries, with proposals for expanding its use. The new manual will be translated, and a group of regional trainers is expected to be formed to support country- or region-led activities.

Regarding the roster, a new category will be created for members who do not renew their contracts. Instead of retiring, they will remain part of a "resource group" to contribute to other activities.

He stressed that UNDAC is working to engage member countries more effectively through the Advisory Board, seeking their advice and contributions, like those shared at this meeting. The mechanism must evolve to remain relevant to the regions. It is hoped that a co-leader will be appointed for the next UNDAC Council, and it would be beneficial to have a member country from this region take on that role.

Session 4: INSARAG Strategic Objective One – Quality Standards

IER Processes

USA-02, Los Angeles County Fire Department

Mr. Joseph Kaleda, USAID/BHA representative, reported that they are sponsoring two USAR classified teams, including the USA-02 team, which has undergone its third reclassification. Among the lessons learned was the creation of a manual for the exercises, along with a cross-reference guide for classifiers to help them determine when and where to conduct activities during the exercise. This guide aids in the execution and evaluation of operations.

In the exercise, it was considered beneficial to develop scripts for the additional teams to more adequately observe the operation of the USAR Coordination Cell (UCC). Additionally, for meetings with the Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA), a specific script was created to better guide these discussions during the exercise. Mr. Kaleda mentioned that including other countries in the exercise proved beneficial. Australia and Chile were invited, strengthening cooperation and fostering mutual learning. Another positive aspect, not included in the IER checklist, was the introduction of random personnel review calls – not only for seismic aftershocks.

One more item not covered in the IER checklist was the inclusion of an actual emergency procedure with clear codes for real exercise-related injuries, in order to avoid confusion with simulated injuries. Mr. Kaleda also highlighted the importance of succession plans, ensuring that new members receive the necessary training to participate in the team and the IER. He detailed some areas that were not well-developed during the ASR, specifically the personnel check and the marking.

Regarding mentoring, he emphasized that systematic and frequent accompaniment is essential. The USA-02 mentor expressed that his role is to be a constructive critic who helps improve the team's performance. He noted that the IER is essentially an open-book test and that maintaining international USAR capability requires constant vigilance, effort, and focus, as capacity can quickly decline for various reasons.

CHI-01, Bomberos de Chile

Mr. Diego Caruezo reported that Bomberos de Chile is a private organization governed by civil law, operating on a voluntary basis. Since 2012, they have been regulated by the Chilean government. The National Board of Fire Brigades consists of a National Directory comprising 314 Fire Departments and a National System of Operations, which oversees emergencies nationwide and coordinates the mobilization of the USAR teams of Bomberos de Chile.

The timeline includes USAR training, which began in 1998. The national accreditation system was established in 2011, aligned with INSARAG guidelines to address emergencies within the country. The first USAR team was accredited in 2013. In 2017, the USAR CHI-01 team achieved INSARAG qualification, along

with members from 11 nationally accredited teams. In 2022, they obtained the IRNAP certificate, and currently, four teams are accredited under the national accreditation system with IRNAP certification. The CHI-01 team's equipment has medium capacity, with 135 components, based on the volunteer firefighter structure, which requires a 3-to-1 ratio. Each shift lasts 60 days, and there is ongoing staff turnover, making regular training essential. Mr. Caruezo noted that the reclassification process took about two years, during which 8 exercises of 36 hours each were completed, along with 11 specialized courses in technology to enhance their capabilities.

Mentoring was led by Mr. Dewey Perks and Mr. Joseph Kaleda, with significant support from the United States, particularly through USAID/BHA and specialists from the Los Angeles and Fairfax USAR teams. This collaboration was a key strength. As a result of the IER, the team identified five areas of "best practice" and eight "yellow items" that still need improvement. They have already begun working on the next reclassification, using the report as a foundation to make improvements and further expand best practices.

IEC Process

Presentation of IEC Processes in Ecuador

Mr. Emmanuel Chapeau, INSARAG Operational Focal Point for France and mentor for the ECU-01 team of the Fire Department of the Metropolitan District of Quito and the ECU-02 team of the Meritorious Fire Department of Guayaquil, reported on the cooperation process between France and Ecuador for the preparation and classification of the USAR ECU-01 and ECU-02 teams. He highlighted that this cooperation took place through the NAP, which laid the foundations for strengthening response capacities in Ecuador.

Mr. Chapeau noted that the next steps involve the start of training with the UCC (USAR Coordination Cell) Course, scheduled for January 2025. He also mentioned that the ECU-01 team, which is at a medium level, has a training schedule that is expected to conclude in 2026. Meanwhile, the ECU-02 team, also at a medium level, is expected to complete its qualification process by 2027. He expressed optimism regarding the successful qualification of both teams.

ECU-01 Fire Department of the Metropolitan District of Quito

Lieutenant Colonel Esteban Cárdenas, Chief of the Fire Department of the Metropolitan District of Quito, shared the background on the development of Ecuador's USAR capability. He emphasized the importance of the INSARAG methodology in strengthening the country's response teams. The cooperation during the Haiti earthquake highlighted the need to develop a national accreditation system based on INSARAG standards and structure. Another key milestone was the 2016 earthquake in Manabí, which resulted in a report identifying areas for improvement. By 2017, five teams had been successively accredited at the national level: two medium and three light.

Subsequently, Ecuador participated in the IRNAP process under the leadership of the National Secretariat for Risk Management, leading to the national reaccreditation of the two medium-level teams, this time under the accreditation system recognized by IRNAP in 2023.

In this context, and with the support of the Metropolitan Municipality of Quito, the Fire Department of the Metropolitan District of Quito began preparing for the INSARAG classification in May 2024, with a focus on ensuring sustainability. Lieutenant Colonel Cárdenas emphasized Ecuador's commitment to continuously improving its emergency response capacity and expressed gratitude to mentor Mr. Emmanuel Chapeau for his ongoing support throughout the training and triage process.

ECU-02 Meritorious Fire Department of Guayaquil

Mr. Jorge Montanero, Chief of the Rescue Division and Leader of the USAR Group of the Meritorious Fire Department of Guayaquil, presented an overview of the country's journey toward the beginning of the classification process. A pivotal moment in this journey was the 2016 earthquake. Prior to this, preparation in Search and Rescue in Collapsed Structures (BREC) had been supported by USAID. In 2016, several areas for improvement were identified at both the political and technical levels. While the UCC played a crucial role in coordinating international USAR teams, there was insufficient knowledge regarding effective coordination between national and international teams. The RDC mechanism was not well understood, and local entities were unaware of the work performed by the USAR teams. Additionally, national authorities had limited knowledge of and access to the OSOCC Virtual Platform, which hindered international USAR coordination. There was also inadequate early assessment of affected structures and a lack of sectorization in the affected areas.

Mr. Montanero emphasized that training should not be limited to USAR teams but should also include relevant state entities. Conducting exercises such as the ERE is critical to improving responsiveness. It is important to note that 80% of the Guayaquil Fire Department personnel are volunteers, which presents a challenge. However, this has been managed through the dedication and professionalism of the team members. The national accreditation process has advanced in accordance with INSARAG standards. Nine USAR teams were accredited with support from the National Secretariat for Risk Management, undergoing annual or biannual reaccreditation processes. **Mr. Montanero** highlighted the strengthening process the team has undergone, noting the achievement of national accreditation through the NAP process and, more recently, through the IRNAP process in 2023. These processes have been crucial in advancing towards the classification process.

Mr. Montanero acknowledged that initiating the IEC process presented challenges in identifying priority needs for preparedness. However, he stressed that this year they have successfully strengthened the UCC, implemented software for operations management (ICMS), and improved the UCC's management in collaboration with the Quito Fire Department during the ERE Internacional Ecuador 2024. With these advancements, **Mr. Montanero** expressed confidence that, with continued commitment, the Guayaquil Fire Department will be able to achieve its INSARAG classification.

- **Plenary Comments**

Minister Jorge Carrillo acknowledged the efforts of the Quito and Guayaquil Fire Departments, expressing his full support and confidence in their ability to achieve their classification objectives.

Ms. Jennifer Unger, Director of the National Public Safety Search and Rescue Secretariat of Canada and INSARAG Canada Policy Focal Point, extended her gratitude to the teams in Chile and Ecuador for sharing their lessons learned. She reported that Canada is initiating both the NAP and IEC processes. Canada is home to highly trained USAR teams, and **Ms. Unger** emphasized the importance of sharing lessons learned within the network. She also stressed the need for continued dialogue and ongoing learning to achieve the set objectives.

Minister José Solla commended the capabilities demonstrated by Ecuador's teams during the ERE Internacional Ecuador 2024 and expressed Brazil's interest in beginning its own qualification processes. He highlighted Brazil's eagerness to actively engage in the qualification process.

Ms. Silvia Ballén underscored the significance of IEC/IER exercises, noting that they provide opportunities for guests to observe the processes. This, in turn, allows countries interested in starting their own classification processes to enhance their knowledge.

USAR & Gender

Ms. Silvia Ballén presented the activity, emphasizing that two years ago, the need to raise awareness about women's involvement in USAR issues was identified. She mentioned that in May, a discussion was held in Colombia on the role and importance of women in search and rescue. Later this year, joint efforts were carried out with Argentina, Uruguay, and OBA, with support from the INSARAG Secretariat, to organize the Conversation on USAR and Gender.

She highlighted that gender and USAR approaches have not been integrated, which presents a challenge in making the process more efficient and inclusive. She also emphasized the empowerment of women in humanitarian action, as promoted by the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Ms. Ballén stressed that the discussion on the "Gender Perspective in Urban Search and Rescue Operations (USAR)" had three main objectives: to identify, make visible, and reflect on the role of women in search and rescue groups. The session included 250 participants and lasted for an hour and a half. It was conducted in Spanish, using a guided dialogue and online exchange. INSARAG and OBA welcomed the participants, and UN Women contributed to the event. Following the dialogue, a panel was held with Ms. Lourdes Estefanía Domínguez (USAR ARG 13), Ms. Claudia Susana Roa Rodríguez (USAR COL-12), and Ms. Annika Coll (USAR ESP-01). Afterward, participants had the opportunity to engage online through an interactive application. Finally, Ms. Ballén proposed organizing more virtual conferences on USAR and Gender, focusing on topics such as INSARAG guidelines, medical issues, and specific technical matters.

Mr. Joseph Kaleda mentioned that Australia has a specific program aimed at encouraging women to join the USAR system. He highlighted that this is a positive approach and suggested reaching out to Australia to share experiences and best practices in this area.

Mr. Leno Rodrigues de Queiroz, General Coordinator of Operations at the National Center for Risk and Disaster Management of Brazil's National Secretariat of Civil Defense and Protection, noted that two colleagues from CENAD, including one who is a member of UNDAC, were at the forefront of firefighting efforts in Bolivia. He expressed interest in including these colleagues in the ongoing dialogue.

Earthquake Response Exercise – Ecuador 2024

Minister Jorge Carrillo focused on the lessons learned from the event, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to host this simulation exercise, which was based on an earthquake scenario in Quito. He highlighted five key achievements:

- Compliance with the established script and capabilities.
- The activation of response structures and mechanisms at both the national and international levels.
- Coordination and exchange of experiences among the different functional areas.
- The flow of information between national and international levels.
- The implementation of established protocols and procedures.

As main considerations, he emphasized the need to reinforce both the practical and theoretical knowledge of the participants for better understanding. He also stressed the importance of establishing a specific agenda for national and international observers, developing coordination protocols in advance, and having the resources to meet the timelines outlined in the script (e.g., printed messages in case electronic means fail).

He shared relevant lessons learned by functional area. For the government area, he highlighted the need to update protocols, improve information flow, and ensure continuity by appointing permanent personnel to the technical government structure. For the USAR area, he pointed out the necessity of strengthening

the link between the UCC and the government response. Additionally, the number of scenarios should be selected based on the number of confirmed teams. In the UNDAC area, he stressed the importance of socializing the role of UNDAC and the UN, enhancing knowledge about the system's functioning and the requirements for financing humanitarian assistance, and applying UNDAC frameworks for national response. For the EMT and Health area, he mentioned the need to strengthen multisectoral coordination with the government structure, use focal points, and improve communication through reference protocols.

Regarding international cooperation and the private sector, he emphasized the need to develop operational procedures to ensure a more predictable and transparent response from the international humanitarian system. It is also crucial to properly channel the contributions of the private sector. For the planning phase, he recommended considering the logistical aspects of spaces, human resources, and reliable internet access. Additionally, the scenario should be defined with scientific and territorial knowledge. When it comes to participation, he advised involving local, regional, and national levels in coordination with international counterparts.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza stressed that during the exercise, critical points were identified for further collaboration. Participants were fully engaged, and valuable learning took place. For the first time, the private sector participated in this type of exercise. The evaluation process was also conducted systematically.

Minister Jorge Carrillo pointed out that Ecuador's new legal framework and regulations were put into practice during the exercise, with significant contributions from international cooperation.

Vice Minister Andrea Hermenejildo thanked both the national and international teams, emphasizing the importance of testing the Emergency Operations Coordination Guide. She noted the substantial learning and the strong involvement of participants over the three days. She encouraged seeking strategies to improve the search for information and thanked everyone for the exercise's productivity.

Mr. Carlos Fidel Martín, INSARAG Policy Focal Point of Cuba, introduced **Colonel Argenis Perales** of the National Civil Defense of Cuba, who also serves as INSARAG Operational Focal Point. He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the meeting and commended Minister Carrillo's precise presentation. He shared that Cuba recently experienced a magnitude 6.7 earthquake, which caused significant infrastructure damage. Cuba is organizing a preparedness and training workshop in mid-January, aimed at authorities and the general population, including children, who were deeply affected by the earthquake. He invited Ecuador and other countries in the network to participate in this workshop.

Mr. Joseph Kaleda congratulated Ecuador for organizing such a well-planned and coordinated exercise. He noted that the lessons learned would be valuable for Ecuador's policies and future events.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza acknowledged USAID's invaluable support in carrying out the exercise, recognizing its contribution to its success.

Session 5: Consultation on the INSARAG Governance Review

Briefing on the 2024 ISG Decisions

Ms. Ana María Rebaza reported that the 2024 ISG discussed the INSARAG Governance Review Report, which included 52 recommendations. She recognized the countries that sponsored the report: China, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and the United States. It was decided to prioritize some of the 52 recommendations and conduct a consultation process. Eight thematic areas were identified for the consultation in the regions, with the results to be presented in a teleconference at the beginning of the year. The goal was to agree on a global position to be presented at the ISG 2025 meeting in March.

She outlined the timeline for the consultation. Additionally, she noted that there are other recommendations that will be discussed in the Working Groups, and some topics concern OCHA, so they will be addressed by the INSARAG Secretariat.

The eight thematic areas are divided into three categories:

1. Institutional Aspects:
 - Leadership and governance
 - Decision-making, mandate, and responsibilities
 - Accountability and compliance
 - Global meetings
2. Strategic Aspects:
 - Global Strategy 2026-2030
 - NGOs and partners
 - Localization
3. Operational Aspects:
 - Classification

Rotating Group Sessions

Three groups were formed to carry out discussions, rotating through each of the three aspects indicated above:

- **Group A:** Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, and CEPREDENAC
- **Group B:** Canada, United States of America, and the French Caribbean Departments
- **Group C:** Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, and Peru

Revision of the INSARAG Guidelines 2026

Mr. Patricio Fuentes, a member of the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group (GRG), indicated that the INSARAG Guidelines Review Cycle is conducted every five years. However, there was a delay due to the pandemic. He explained that the guidelines are presented to the leaders of USAR teams. Originally scheduled for completion in 2025, the publication will now occur in 2026. The guidelines will first be presented at the UNDAC Team Leaders meeting and then at the ISG.

Among the tasks of the GRG is the dissemination of the guidelines during the review process, ensuring that Team Leaders and INSARAG Regional Groups are well-informed. The requested changes have been implemented, and the recommendations from the review of the earthquake response in Türkiye have been considered. He introduced the 14 members participating in the GRG, which includes representatives from AEME, Asia-Pacific, and two members from the Americas group, all from qualified USAR teams.

Mr. Fuentes highlighted proposed changes for the 2026 guidelines. Some of the changes involve:

- The activation of missions and decision-making for team deployments.
- Addressing the duplication of information in VOSOC and ICMS.
- Simplifying equipment data sheets.
- Clarifying the use of sectors in reference to ASR 1 and 2.
- Decision-making processes in ASR 2 for ASR 3 or ASR 4.
- Prioritizing workplaces and triage.

- Working with the NCBWG on requests for international assistance and equipment classification (light, medium, and heavy), including the form for such requests.
- Defining the completed work site.
- Creating technical sheets for unclassified USAR equipment so that they can be registered and receive information to improve coordination and repair or replacement of resources.

He also presented the GRG's activity schedule, including participation in regional meetings, the Team Leaders Meeting, and the ISG 2025 and 2026, culminating in the launch of the Guidelines at the INSARAG Global Meeting in 2026.

Ms. Silvia Ballén asked if the reference topic for the guidelines had been closed and whether countries could still propose topics for revision. **Mr. Belit Tasdemir**, a member of the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group, responded that while inputs from other Working Groups are being collected, a broader call for contributions from the regions will be opened at a later date.

Mr. Patricio Fuentes emphasized the importance of input from both member states and qualified teams, noting that little feedback has been received so far.

Presentation of Conclusions of the Group Sessions

The facilitators of the group work, **Mr. Patricio Fuentes**, **Ms. Ana María Rebaza** and **Mr. Belit Tasdemir** presented the consolidation of the consultation carried out regarding the 8 prioritized thematic areas:

Prioritized Areas and Questions Asked	Results and Discussion
1. Leadership and Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should one of the Regional Chairs act as a Deputy Global Chair? • If yes, what are the roles and responsibilities of the Deputy Global Chair? • How will this impact or strengthen the ISG? 	<p>67% of those consulted did not agree on the Deputy Global Chair.</p> <p>In the discussion, it was emphasized that a closer relationship is needed between the Global Chair of INSARAG and the Regional Groups, as there is currently no dynamic mechanism to facilitate this interaction.</p>
2. Decision-Making Mandate and Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus is endorsed when nobody eligible to vote objects. Agree? • If consensus cannot be reached, defer to Global Chair, Regional Chairs and Secretary? 	<p>67% of participants agreed with the consensus definition.</p> <p>100% said that if consensus is not reached, it is necessary to determine a majority for decisions.</p> <p>It would require a greater majority than a simple majority, with the exact proportion to be agreed upon. However, it is essential to ensure that decision-making is not stalled due to a lack of consensus.</p>
3. Accountability and Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q1: Should INSARAG be either INSARAG Standard or INSARAG Guidelines? • Should INSARAG have an internal investigations framework within the INSARAG Guidelines? 	<p>75% of those consulted agreed to move to Standards.</p> <p>The definitions of these concepts carry distinct meanings and implications, even though they are often used interchangeably in daily discussions. A</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, is it agreed if PFPs and TFPs to provide internal investigation assurances to the INSARAG Secretariat? • Should the network apply 'soft' or 'hard' penalties within the system? 	<p>standard generally implies stricter enforceability and a higher level of quality assurance, ultimately contributing to more effective life-saving efforts. INSARAG guidelines currently include checklists that, in practice, function as standards for INSARAG classification and IRNAP certification. However, shifting to formal standards would have significant organizational implications, as enforcing mandatory standards may extend beyond the mandate of a network. It is recommended that a legal analysis be conducted to assess both the feasibility of this transition and the implications for compliance.</p> <p>92% agreed that there should be an internal investigations framework but with precision.</p> <p>The term "research" is not considered appropriate due to its political implications. Instead, the focus should be on analyzing good practices and identifying areas for improvement in operations. The INSARAG Guidelines already contain elements related to compliance and even penalties. However, a clear procedure is needed that outlines the escalation of situations and establishes a structured flow of actions, ensuring a peer-to-peer approach. It is proposed to include a technical guidance annex detailing this procedure. Additionally, the code of conduct should be considered, as it is already part of the INSARAG Guidelines, while each country also maintains its own version.</p>
<p>4. Global Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should we discontinue the Global Meeting and reallocate resources to activities identified as vital within INSARAG's strategy? • Should operational issues be discussed at the Team Leaders Meeting, in the Working Groups and in the newly established Regional Operational Meetings? 	<p>Most agreed to continue the Global Meeting. The minority that disagreed said that the existing annual meetings on the calendar are enough.</p> <p>Most believe that creating regional operational meetings is unnecessary.</p> <p>Members are already discussing operational issues bilaterally, and these matters should be addressed at regional meetings through the Policy and Operational Focal Points. If needed, additional ad hoc meetings can be held, or the Operations Working Group may be re-established.</p>
<p>5. Global Strategy 2026-2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop INSARAG's strategy for 2025-2030, should there be a discussion at the political level about INSARAG/USAR's position within the broader humanitarian context? Yes or no? Why or more suggestions? 	<p>The majority opinion is favorable with the following considerations.</p> <p>It was felt that INSARAG/USAR's position within a broader humanitarian context is already established and resources are not used strictly for USAR. Further discussion is welcome with further definitions of what a broader humanitarian context is and can be initiated at the political level, but not necessarily as part of INSARAG's strategy for 2026-2030.</p>

	INSARAG must remain relevant to the evolving nature of disasters, however, INSARAG's mandate at this time is to USAR.
<p>6. NGOs and Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should changes be made to the current arrangements for policy focal points, operational focal points and team focal points of government agencies and NGO teams, so that they remain only team focal points? Should the Policy Focal Points make the final decision on allowing the NGO to join the INSARAG network? Should all subsequent correspondence be directed to NGO teams rather than through national focal points? Should NGO Team Leaders/Liaison Centres be able to represent their region at the proposed Regional Operational Meetings? 	<p>Most disagreed with the changes to the current provisions.</p> <p>The majority agreed that the final decision to allow NGOs to join the INSARAG network should remain with the Policy Focal Points.</p> <p>The majority position is that communication should be done through the national focal points. Some members are not against direct communication, but only with national focal points in copy.</p> <p>The majority position is that they should not represent their region.</p> <p>Few members support NGOs representing regions at such meetings, particularly in cases where Member States lack legislation to regulate NGOs.</p>
<p>7. Localization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should Regional Groups map global USAR capacity to identify gaps and agree on priority countries with the INSARAG network? Should the Regional Groups undertake a mapping of vulnerable countries and work with donors and the INSARAG network to develop a capacity building programme for countries requesting external support? 	<p>Most do not agree with the identification of gaps or the drawing up of lists of priority countries.</p> <p>Announcing priority or vulnerable countries may have domestic political implications for those countries. The gaps are already being identified and addressed bilaterally with appropriate assistance.</p> <p>There is no need for regional groups to map vulnerable countries.</p>
<p>8. Classification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should all teams within the INSARAG network first achieve IRNAP status before being allowed to join the IEC system? Should the focus be on building domestic or national capacity first, followed by the potential for developing a NAP, and then an IRNAP? 	<p>100% agreed with both questions</p> <p>Although the development of INSARAG took place at the international level and the IRNAP process began a few years ago, it is considered most advisable to consolidate the national system first. Some countries have conducted the IEC first and then the IRNAP, as it was introduced later. They emphasize the importance of prioritizing work at the national level before moving to international processes.</p>

Session 6: INSARAG Strategic Objective Two – Localization

USAR National Strengthening Plan in Argentina

Ms. Debora Luzzi, representative of the INSARAG/UNDAC Argentina Policy Focal Point, opened the presentation by emphasizing Argentina's commitment to the INSARAG network. She highlighted key milestones in the development of the USAR National Strengthening Plan in Argentina, including commitments to United Nations mechanisms related to INSARAG and the establishment of Argentina's Policy and Operational Focal Points in the foreign relations and national security sectors. She also pointed out the creation of the National System for Integrated Risk Management (SINAGIR) and the development of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Plan in 2016. Additionally, the Ministerial Resolutions that gave rise to the USAR national accreditation instruments and the National USAR Operations Manual were all based on the INSARAG Guidelines.

Ms. Luzzi noted Argentina's active participation in the ISG and the Americas Regional Group, with the country assuming the Americas Regional Chair in both 2019 and 2023. Argentina has 5 accredited USAR teams – 3 Light and 2 Medium. She highlighted Argentina's participation in the earthquake response in Turkey and emphasized that the country completed the IRNAP process in 2023. Argentina also organized the Earthquake Response Exercise (ERE) in San Juan, Argentina. In this context, the USAR National Strengthening Plan is the result of a maturation process aimed at enhancing both national and international USAR procedures within the framework of INSARAG Guidelines.

Ms. Andrea Chapini, representative of the INSARAG Argentina Operational Focal Point, mentioned that the National USAR Plan is a collective effort to expand USAR capacities across the country. Awareness-raising activities, such as courses and seminars, were prioritized. It was identified that several teams needed support to achieve their accreditation. Another focus was strengthening the work of K9 units and improving coordination between USAR teams and Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) in the field. Additionally, management of information on the SINAME platform, which includes geolocation capabilities, was highlighted.

Ms. Debora Luzzi concluded by expressing gratitude to many colleagues in the region, including the OCHA Emergency Response Section, as well as the support from Chile, Colombia, USAID, and all the GTA/GTR experts involved in Argentina's emergency response process. She proposed carrying out additional activities in line with the goals of the USAR National Strengthening Plan.

National Capacity Building and NAP/IRNAP Processes in the Region

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer, Co-Chair of the Working Group on National Capacity Development (NCBWG), emphasized the region's achievements in localizing and strengthening national capacities, highlighting the innovative, participatory, and collaborative approach taken.

The National Accreditation Working Group was transformed into the National Capacity Building Working Group over the past year, aligning with the second strategic objective of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2021-2026, which focuses on localization. One of the key objectives related to localization is to enhance coordination of the frontline response by adapting methodologies in each country. As there is no universal approach, this presents a unique challenge in every nation. Additionally, the work involves capacity building and preparedness at the community level, as well as innovation and the exchange of knowledge and good practices.

The response to the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria served as an important learning experience. A report was published highlighting capacity building and localization efforts, emphasizing the need to adapt to the specific challenges faced by each country. This report included guidance to support the requesting nation, USAR national coordination, and integration with international teams.

The NCBWG has been active for a year and has contributed significantly to global forums, with five expected results:

- Review Manual A and Volume I of the INSARAG Guidelines
- Train IRNAP experts
- Provide support to affected nations requesting assistance
- Strengthen USAR national coordination
- Promote community-based training

Mr. Mocarquer presented the 2024-2026 work plan, detailing the activities in greater depth. He reported that the GTA/GTR expert training course has been renamed the IRNAP Leadership Course to align it with the IEC/R Leaders and Mentors Course. He highlighted the availability of the First Responder Course package developed by THW (Germany).

Handbook A on Capacity Development, first published in 2015, has not undergone major updates, except for the inclusion of the IRNAP theme. The goal is to simplify and reduce the manual, while ensuring more frequent revisions based on practical learnings. The structure will address multi-threat responses, incorporating systems that can support USAR operations as well as other response efforts, optimizing the investment in USAR equipment through a modular approach, while maintaining the core components of planning and support.

The strategic elements will be preserved in Handbook A, with specific details to be outlined in Technical Guidance Notes on topics such as USAR Capacity Development, USAR National Coordination, Receiving International Assistance, and National Quality Assurance (NAP/IRNAP) between 2025 and 2026. He underscored the importance of regional participation in these discussions, given the wealth of experience and insights in the region.

Mr. Mocarquer also mentioned that progress on the IRNAP processes in the region has been limited this year, with ongoing processes in Honduras, Panama, and the IRNAP recertification in Guatemala. He identified barriers to progress, including a lack of knowledge about the IRNAP process among teams, challenges in accessing specialized technical advice, limited resources, and regulatory compliance issues. Specifically, there is a need for institutional support for USAR teams that is well integrated with the national system to ensure the sustainability of the national accreditation process.

• Plenary discussion

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer posed two questions to the plenary: one concerning unmet needs for USAR capacity development and the other about how Member States of the Americas can support these efforts.

Mr. Carlos Julio La Motta pointed out that there are limited opportunities in the region to access the UCC course. For the ICMS, efforts have been made to offer both online and face-to-face training sessions in preparation for some exercises. He emphasized that both initiatives are critical for strengthening USAR teams.

Mr. Patricio Fuentes highlighted that a significant challenge faced by USAR teams when starting USAR systems and national accreditation processes is the lack of mentors and technical advice for capacity building. Despite this, there has been notable collaboration between countries to address these challenges.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza mentioned the potential of a project that would facilitate USAR National Coordination and National Accreditation courses across CEPREDENAC member countries and stressed the need to expand this effort. She also noted that a network of regional experts could further strengthen this work and called for progress in establishing agreements to optimize these efforts.

Mr. Manuel José Rymer, Representative of CEPREDENAC, supported this by indicating that the SDC-supported project has been a good practice for strengthening capacities and knowledge. He suggested that this effort could be replicated and would be extremely beneficial for other countries in the region.

Ms. Silvia Ballén shared that Colombia is collaborating with El Salvador through their foreign Ministries, emphasizing the importance of involving Foreign Ministries in facilitating both the exchange of knowledge and the financing of actions.

Mr. Diego Caruezo Galindo stressed that countries need to be willing and available when support is requested in emergencies, highlighting Chile's role in assisting Mexico in their qualification process.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza proposed formalizing a regional working group based on the regional USAR experts who have developed technical proposals over the years. This group could work alongside the NCBWG to advance both regional and global objectives. She also recognized USAID/BHA for its support in training processes, financing activities, and its significant role in the regional process. She proposed aligning USAID's work plans with INSARAG's regional work plan for greater synergy.

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer noted that the NCBWG is underrepresented in the region and expressed the challenge of channeling the regional contribution effectively. He suggested that the regional group should be able to anticipate global discussions to make meaningful contributions.

Mr. Diego Caruezo added that Chile is available to coordinate this group and encouraged another country to join in providing support for this process.

IRNAP Certificate awarded to Ecuador

Ms. Shelley Cheatham was pleased to deliver the certificate. She reviewed Ecuador's IRNAP process that began in 2022 and culminated in November 2023. The support phase included the Technical Support Group, composed of **Mr. Walter Fonseca** of Costa Rica and **Mr. Erwin Olivares** of the Dominican Republic, and the recognition phase, the working group was composed of **Mr. Alejandro García** of Argentina, **Mr. Ícaro Greinert** of Brazil, and **Mr. Emmanuel Chapeau** of France. Ecuador's accreditation system demonstrated its adherence to the INSARAG Guidelines. During the exercise, the ECU-01 team of the Fire Department of the Metropolitan District of Quito and ECU-02 of the Meritorious Fire Department of Guayaquil were reaccruited at the medium level. She concluded, congratulating on behalf of OCHA and the INSARAG Secretariat, the Republic of Ecuador for the work done and for continuing to be committed to strengthening the USAR work in the country and INSARAG in the region.

Minister Jorge Carrillo expressed his gratitude for the certificate and expressed his pride in being the fourth country in the region and ninth in the world to obtain the IRNAP certificate. He congratulated the ECU-01 and ECU-02 teams for their dedication and success in this accreditation, extending his thanks also to the government team and institutions that have worked since 2017 to make this achievement possible. He stressed that Ecuador is prepared to face the most demanding challenges in urban search and rescue and beyond complying with INSARAG standards, it is a sign of a commitment to life by applying the best international practices. He thanked the international experts who evaluated Ecuador's national accreditation system, guaranteeing the transparency and quality of this recognition. Congratulations were extended to the fire departments of Quito and Guayaquil for their commitment and technical quality, as well as to the local governments and each institution that has worked and supported this effort. Ecuador renewed its commitment to continuous training and constant improvement and to the lives of every citizen who may need the support of the USAR teams. Finally, Minister Carrillo pointed out that this achievement reflects what can be achieved when working together and urged all countries to continue uniting these efforts.

Session 7: INSARAG Strategic Objective Three – Flexible Response

Search and Rescue in Flood Response

Minister José Solla, Director General of Humanitarian Cooperation at the Brazilian Cooperation Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Policy Diplomatic Focal Point of INSARAG, and Focal Point of UNDAC of Brazil, delivered a report on the Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group, contributing to the Strategic Objective of Flexible Response. Minister Solla outlined the key terms of reference and responsibilities of the working group, which include: developing the concept of flood response alongside associated hazards; identifying capacities, experiences, standards, methodologies, processes, and legislation of member countries related to flood response to foster exchange; mapping existing capacities across the three regions; establishing a directory of classified and national teams available for flood response; identifying areas for improvement in flood response; promoting local capacities; developing a technical reference note on the subject; and establishing a reference framework for flood response to be incorporated into Manual A of the INSARAG Guidelines.

The anticipated outputs include a Directory of Member States' capacities for voluntary flood response, a review of standards, and a Technical Reference Note to guide national and local capacity development. The composition of the Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group was also presented. Following a replacement for the member from Argentina and the non-renewal of the CDEMA representative, an expert from Brazil was integrated into the group. Minister Solla noted that 25 countries participated in the survey, with the results being shared at the 2024 Team Leaders' Meeting in Belo Horizonte. However, only five countries from the Americas responded. The collected data will be used to create a Directory detailing the capacities of each team available for international response.

Additionally, the draft of the Technical Reference Note was introduced as guidance for USAR teams capable of responding to floods within the INSARAG coordination framework. The document defines key concepts, categorizes equipment by size (light, medium, and heavy), and outlines the levels of rescue operations. Looking ahead, the Technical Note will be presented at the Team Leaders' meeting in February, with final products expected to be delivered at the ISG in March in Geneva. Minister Solla expressed interest in establishing a Regional Working Group comprised of specialists to support the completion of the work on the Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group. A communication will be sent out to facilitate the formation of this group.

- **Plenary Discussion**

Ms. Ana María Rebaza urged participation to strengthen this work among the countries of the region.

Ms. Silvia Ballén reported that Colombia can join the initiative, highlighting that her country has the necessary capacities to participate. She requested a letter through the INSARAG Secretariat to send the names of the qualified people who could be part of the group. She also thanked **Brazil** for the work done.

Mr. Diego Caruezo inquired whether members of the Global Working Group would continue in the Regional Working Group. In response, **Minister José Solla** confirmed that they would continue and emphasized that the regional group would aim to strengthen capacities and develop materials that support countries in the region in their preparedness and response to flood emergencies.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza pointed out that there is already advanced work in the global group, and the idea is to gather regional experience to contribute to this process.

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya expressed that El Salvador supports the initiative, requesting a formal reminder for his country regarding the process and the steps to follow to participate.

Mr. Manuel Rymer expressed interest in joining the effort with CEPREDENAC member countries to support the initiative.

Minister Jorge Carrillo indicated that Ecuador will join the effort, highlighting Ecuador's commitment to strengthening regional capacities.

Mr. César Sierra confirmed that Peru is also a member of the group and will actively participate in the initiative.

Minister José Solla stressed the importance of maintaining the focus on hydrometeorological risks. He noted that later, the dialogue could be deepened to discuss other types of disasters. However, he reiterated the importance of maintaining the focus on flood response.

Session 8: INSARAG Strategic Objective Four – Partnerships

Americas Regional Group Partnerships

Ms. Silvia Ballén provided an update on the progress of the strategic objective in the Work Plan. She began by highlighting the strengthening of the relationship with CEPREDENAC, noting that no progress had been made with CDEMA. She also recalled the advancements made with OBA and the potential for carrying out further activities. However, she mentioned that there had been no progress in establishing a relationship with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) or with CAPRADE. The terms of reference for the collaborative efforts between the Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) and the USAR medical teams are still pending. Lastly, she suggested that a working space could be opened with MERCOSUR.

- **Plenary discussion**

Minister José Solla highlighted that MERCOSUR covers various areas of work, with Brazil playing an active role. He noted that Argentina leads the Working Group on disaster risk management, which encompasses preparedness and response efforts. Brazil is taking steps to foster closer collaboration with INSARAG to strengthen this alliance. He also shared that a bilateral coordination agreement had been reached between Brazil and Paraguay to conduct an exercise focused on flood risk between border cities.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham emphasized the importance of raising awareness about INSARAG in various forums, such as the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the European Union, CEDEMA, CEPREDENAC, CAPRADE, and other countries, with the support of UNDRR. She encouraged the countries in the region to actively participate in these meetings, ensuring that INSARAG's priority themes, including flexible response, are integrated into those spaces.

Minister José Solla informed the group that, under the framework of the Brasilia Consensus, South American countries were granted access to MERCOSUR meetings. He also discussed the MoU with the European Union, noting that Brazil, on behalf of MERCOSUR, had participated in the negotiations. The process had been challenging, as the terms were finalized, and there was an opportunity to review the terms of reference. The discussions highlighted the importance of including OCHA in the agreement to ensure a full representation of the disaster cycle, but it had not yet been incorporated. Minister Solla

mentioned that while pending talks with MERCOSUR remain, other regional mechanisms, including Mexico, Cuba, and Chile, have already signed the MoU.

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya proposed leveraging the funds from the U.S. Southern Command's humanitarian assistance program to conduct exercises such as CENTAM Guardian, which includes the USAR component. These exercises have been held in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador in previous years. He shared that the 2025 exercise would take place in Guatemala and suggested exploring a potential alliance with the Southern Command. Regarding the CEPREDENAC Regional Drill, El Salvador recommended adopting the ERE model to optimize the efforts made.

Mr. Joseph Kaleda noted that the CENTAM Guardian exercise, promoted by the U.S. Southern Command, is military in nature, which may limit the participation of some countries that lack the necessary facilities. For example, the USAR teams from the United States would be unable to participate due to the exercise's military nature. He also raised a question regarding the community of practice between the EMTs and the medical component of the USAR teams, recalling that there is a global alliance between INSARAG and WHO through the EMT mechanism.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza reported that the possibility of creating a community of practice between the medical component of USAR teams and EMTs had been explored with PAHO/WHO. A meeting had been held with Anthony McQuintire, co-chair of the INSARAG Medical Working Group, and Luis de la Fuente of PAHO/WHO, during which several steps were agreed upon. These included developing the Terms of Reference for the alliance and organizing a first dialogue activity between the medical components of USAR classified teams in the Americas and the EMTs in the region. The Terms of Reference are currently awaiting a proposal from PAHO/WHO.

Ms. Silvia Ballén emphasized the importance of advancing this alliance between the EMTs and the USAR medical components to ensure a coordinated response.

Session 9: Guidelines for INSARAG and UNDAC Work Plans in the Americas 2025

Proposals for UNDAC Work Plans in the Americas 2025

Ms. Ana María Rebaza began with the presentation of the proposal for the UNDAC Work Plan in the Americas 2025. She informed that, in the second semester, two refresher courses will be held at the global level: one in the region, hosted by Chile, to be held in English and Spanish; and a second one, between October and November in another region. She also reported that an Induction course is planned for the second semester in Nairobi, Kenya. The information of these courses will be announced through the Virtual OSOCC and communications will be sent to the UNDAC Focal Points.

Among the proposed activities is the holding of a webinar on the Private Sector, projected for the month of January; and another projected later in the year on UNDAC Operational Partners. There is a possible webinar that was proposed in previous years on Leadership but is not yet scheduled. For the month of February, she proposed to have a meeting with the UNDAC Focal Points of the region to strengthen a closer dialogue, update global information and exchange between countries the rapid response mechanisms in the region that take elements of the UNDAC methodology to provide support to subnational authorities responsible for managing emergencies. It was also urged to develop courses or webinars that are for exchange between countries or courses to develop and improve the methodology in the region.

She emphasized the importance of participating in the UNDAC Consultative Meeting in Geneva, scheduled for March in the framework of the Humanitarian Networks and Alliances Week in Geneva, bringing the proposals of the Region. She recalled that the UNDAC roster in the Americas is being updated in communication with the Focal Points. There are currently 45 active members, and the roster update process will continue in 2025.

To the question of **Minister José Solla**, about where the meetings with the UNDAC Focal Points of the region would be held, it was mentioned that the meetings will be held virtually. However, in the event that a country proposes to host a meeting, it could be held in a hybrid way.

After the question by **Minister José Solla** about how many places there are for the UNDAC Induction course, it was indicated that there is no specific number of participants selected by region because it is a selection process that has fundamentally technical criteria, not only geographical, for example, gender balance, specific technical knowledge, languages, etc. In addition, he urged countries to nominate colleagues who are really available to deploy to missions and who have knowledge about disaster management since the induction course does not provide training in that aspect, but based on skills and knowledge the induction is to be part of the UNDAC system representing the United Nations.

Minister José Solla asked what is the profile that is required, in addition to the technical criteria, such as knowledge of languages and gender balance, and it was indicated that in terms of gender balance, there is a 70/30 imbalance in the roster between men and women. Regarding technical issues, he pointed out that an issue that is always missing is the management of information in disasters, and as well as this there are other technical issues.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham suggested a consultation be undertaken by the region to have greater clarity on the profiles that will be prioritized so that candidates can be properly chosen according to the requirements that will be prioritized for the UNDAC induction course in Nairobi based on the current gaps of the global roster. **Minister José Solla** requested to carry out this consultation to have the information at the meeting of Focal Points in February.

Mr. Diego Caruezo, INSARAG Operational Focal Point of Chile, asked about the Induction courses in the region of the Americas and what is the global position given that this region is very active and contributes to global work. **Ms. Ana María Rebaza** indicated that the decision for 2025 is to offer only one induction course this year to be held in Nairobi. **Minister José Solla** joined Chile's intervention to insist on the region's offer to host an induction course and spoke in the sense that there is dissatisfaction in relation to how the UNDAC courses are prioritized.

Regarding the update of the UNDAC regional roster, **Ms. Ana María Rebaza** noted that it is important for the Focal Points to be in coordination with their UNDAC national members so that they are up to date with the requirements and respond to alerts, whether they are available or not. She pointed out that at the meeting of Focal Points in February, proposals can be presented to keep the regional roster active and prepared.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham suggested that proposals can be submitted in February for other activities such as familiarisation with the UNDAC methodology, and these proposals can be taken to the UNDAC Advisory Consultative meeting in Geneva in March.

Proposals for the INSARAG Las Américas 2025 Work Plan:

Ms. Ana María Rebaza presented the proposals for programmed activities related to Strategic Objective 1 – Quality Standards. The first activity, a teleconference scheduled for January 16, will be held virtually, where the work plan for 2025 will be presented. Following this, the global activity of the INSARAG Working

Group Meeting will take place from 9-11 February, and the USAR Team Leaders Meeting will take place from 12-14 February in Tunis, Tunisia. This event will prepare elements to be discussed at the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) Meeting in Geneva in March.

Ms. Rebaza also encouraged participation in HNPW, which will include several topics of interest, in addition to two scheduled meetings: the Meeting of the UNDAC Advisory Board and the Meeting of the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG), where key decisions for the network will be made. It was pointed out that the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship meets every two months. Ms. Rebaza also noted that the INSARAG and UNDAC Regional Meeting will be held in Brazil between October and November and recommended choosing a date that does not coincide with the ERE, which will also be held in Brazil. Regarding the INSARAG Classification and Reclassification processes, Ms. Rebaza highlighted the follow-up with Colombia for its reclassification and the ongoing classification processes for the USAR teams from the Fire Department of the Metropolitan District of Quito and the Meritorious Fire Department of Guayaquil.

On the topic of dissemination, Ms. Rebaza proposed withdrawing the regional bulletin activity and focusing on the translation of INSARAG documents, which is vital for dissemination not only regionally but also within countries with the relevant teams and agencies. Another proposed activity involves the systematization of the results from the USAR and Gender Conversation, led by Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay, in collaboration with OBA. The preparation of the Report for the ERE Internacional Ecuador 2024 was included, as well as the organization of the ERE Internacional Brazil 2025, which will require the selection of regional experts to participate in the EXCON.

Mr. Diego Caruezo requested that the INSARAG Secretariat take the necessary steps to facilitate the process of obtaining the required visas for participation in the meeting in February in Tunisia, to which Ms. Rebaza confirmed that the request would be granted.

Ms. Jennifer Unger, INSARAG Policy Focal Point of Canada, asked whether countries have conducted specific work in the area of post-traumatic stress injuries or operational stress injuries, and if they support treatment and training interventions for urban rescue teams, firefighters, police, and paramedics. She mentioned that Canada has existing resources that are publicly available and shared that, over the past five years, Public Safety Canada launched a national action plan on post-traumatic stress injuries for public safety personnel.

Ms. Unger emphasized the importance of sharing these resources within the network to explore further goals.

In response, **Ms. Ana María Rebaza** acknowledged that, as with the dialogue on gender and USAR, this is an issue that impacts first responders and would be valuable to explore. She underscored the importance of simultaneous translation to facilitate dialogues and workspaces on this issue, which could be organized during the year.

Minister José Solla emphasized the need to arrive at the meetings in Tunis and Geneva prepared for the discussions, particularly in relation to flood response, and to propose a clear process to be followed. He reported that Brazil has other international commitments that will complicate its 2025 agenda, including participation in the troika of the working group on disasters in the G20, the presidency of BRICS on disaster issues, co-leadership with Chile on disaster issues in the Brasilia Consensus, and the upcoming COP 30. As such, Brazil will need to carefully consider the calendar for organizing the Regional Meeting and the International ERE.

Regarding Strategic Objective 2 – Localization, **Ms. Rebaza** provided updates on the follow-up of the IRNAP processes in Panama, Honduras, and Guatemala. She further mentioned the formation of the Regional National Capacity Development Group and the development of an internal plan to support the revision of Handbook A and the implementation of training activities. This technical team will focus on

strengthening national capacities in the region. The leadership of this group will be under the guidance of Chile, with support from the INSARAG Secretariat.

Concerning Strategic Objective 3 – Flexible Response, **Ms. Rebaza** reported ongoing efforts related to search and rescue in flood response. Globally, the Search and Rescue in Flood Response Working Group includes Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States. It was agreed to form a Regional Group on Flood Response, with participation from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru, Uruguay, and CEPREDENAC, supported by the INSARAG Secretariat.

For Strategic Objective 4 – Partnerships, **Ms. Rebaza** noted that CEPREDENAC had coordinated support for a course for its member countries in January, convening the IRNAP group of experts in the region. Experts from USAID and Costa Rica are also contributing to this effort. Another important alliance is with OBA, with which an agreement is already in place. The most recent activity involved organizing the Dialogue on USAR and Gender, with participation from Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay. Chile is currently holding the presidency of OBA. A third alliance that needs to be reactivated is with PAHO/WHO and the EMT mechanism. The proposal for the Terms of Reference, which PAHO/WHO committed to drafting for the creation of a community of practice between Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) and the medical component of USAR teams, is still pending. The first meeting would involve the classified EMT teams and the medical components of the INSARAG-classified USAR teams in the region. Brazil has expressed interest in participating in this initiative.

Ms. Silvia Ballén called for support from countries that have the capacity to finance the simultaneous translation of the upcoming USAR and Gender online activities, to ensure that all countries in the region can participate.

Country Announcements

Call for the Incoming Chair in the Americas 2025

After consulting the plenary on which countries would be able to assume the Incoming Chair of the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas in 2025, **Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya**, INSARAG Policy Focal Point of El Salvador, reported that, after the consultation with the Minister of the Interior, who is President of the National Civil Protection Commission, El Salvador expresses its interest in running for Incoming Chair in 2025.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza thanked El Salvador for the offer and, consequently, it was confirmed that El Salvador would join the 2025 Regional Troika as the Incoming Chair.

INSARAG Global Meeting 2026

After consulting the plenary on the application to be the host country of the INSARAG Global Meeting 2026, **Minister José Solla** expressed Brazil's interest in being the host country for the INSARAG Global Meeting 2026.

Ms. Ana María Rebaza thanked Brazil for its interest and **Ms. Silvia Ballén** highlighted Brazil's offer and encouraged the region's participation in the Global Meeting.

Session 10: INSARAG Regional Chairmanship Handover

INSARAG recognition to Argentina for their work as Outgoing Regional Chair INSARAG in 2024

Ms. Shelley Cheatham recognized Argentina's work in the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas, noting that its participation had been especially valuable and had contributed to the development of important proposals both for the region and at the global level. She highlighted Argentina's contributions in the field of search and rescue in flood response, as well as its role in the development of the International ERE in San Juan, Argentina, in 2023. She also acknowledged Argentina's support this year in organizing the ERE Internacional Ecuador 2024 as part of the control team. Furthermore, she commended Argentina's involvement in the GTA/GTR 2023 course held in Ambato, Ecuador. Ms. Cheatham emphasized that in 2023, Argentina achieved INSARAG certification, successfully completing the IRNAP process based on sustained work over many years. Finally, she presented a symbolic recognition for Argentina's participation in the Regional Chairmanship, which will be sent to the country in due course.

Ms. Débora Luzzi, Head of Multilateral Affairs of the White Helmets Commission, on behalf of **Ambassador Eduardo Porretti**, President of the White Helmets Commission and INSARAG Policy Focal Point of Argentina, conveyed greetings from Mr. Santiago Hardie, INSARAG Operational Focal Point of Argentina. She expressed words of gratitude to the colleagues of the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas, to the countries of the region, and to OCHA. Ms. Luzzi emphasized the satisfaction of having participated in the Regional Chairmanship for a second three-year term, reaffirming Argentina's commitment to supporting the new INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas.

INSARAG Recognition of Ecuador for their work as 2024 INSARAG Regional Chair

Ms. Shelley Cheatham expressed her appreciation to Ecuador by addressing **Minister Jorge Carillo**, National Secretary of Risk Management and President of the Americas Regional Roundtable, INSARAG Policy Focal Point, **Ms. Andrea Hermenejildo**, Undersecretary of the SNGR, and **Ms. Erika Poveda**, alternate INSARAG/UNDAC Focal Point of the SNGR. She highlighted Ecuador's exemplary leadership in the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship, particularly for the successful organization of the International Earthquake Response Exercise held from 2-5 December, which required months of sustained effort. Ms. Cheatham also commended the initiation of the classification processes for two Ecuadorian teams: the Fire Department of the Metropolitan District of Quito and the Meritorious Fire Department of Guayaquil. She emphasized Ecuador's unwavering commitment and expressed confidence that the country would continue to support the region. Ms. Cheatham then presented Minister Jorge Carillo with a plaque of recognition from INSARAG to Ecuador.

Minister Jorge Carillo shared both personal and institutional satisfaction in having served as President of the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship in the Americas. He expressed his gratitude to INSARAG, OCHA, USAID, and especially the team from the National Secretariat of Risk Management of Ecuador for their dedicated efforts. Minister Carillo also thanked Ecuador for the trust placed in him to fulfill this responsibility. He recognized the valuable participation of the Fire Departments of Guayaquil and Quito, extending his appreciation for their contributions to the process, and wished the incoming Chair much success in their endeavors.

Announcement on the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship in the Americas 2025 by the INSARAG Secretariat

Ms. Ana María Rebaza announced that the INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas for 2025 will be led by Brazil as the current Chair, with Ecuador as the outgoing Chair and El Salvador as the incoming Chair.

Mr. Wolnei Wolff, National Secretary of Civil Protection and Defense of the Ministry of Integration and

Regional Development, INSARAG Policy Focal Point of Brazil, then addressed the participants with words of greeting. He expressed his gratitude for the participation of **Minister José Solla**, INSARAG and UNDAC Focal Point, and **Mr. Leno Rodrigues de Queiroz**, who represented Brazil at the regional meeting. He underscored the importance of the regional meeting in strengthening efforts to improve national responses to save lives and enhance the coordination of international USAR teams, made possible by the shared standards of cooperation.

Mr. Wolff highlighted Brazil's assistance to Türkiye during the earthquake that occurred in 2023, noting Brazil's significant contribution to the response efforts. He also recognized the necessity of adapting to the challenges posed by climate change, particularly with regard to increasingly frequent and intense hydrometeorological disasters. He reaffirmed Brazil's commitment to the development of INSARAG's Strategic Objective 3, acknowledging that 70% of disasters are climate related. He also recalled that this year, Brazil faced significant flooding as well as forest fires, demonstrating the importance of a robust response capacity. Mr. Wolff emphasized his dedication as the regional president of INSARAG, committed to continuing efforts to save lives and strengthen disaster response capabilities.

The official photo of the new INSARAG Regional Chairmanship of the Americas for 2025 was then taken:



Words of appreciation were shared with **Ms. Ana Maria Rebaza**, INSARAG and UNDAC Regional Focal Point in the Americas at the conclusion of her work in this role.

Session 11: Closing

The XXIII Meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group and the XI UNDAC Regional Meeting of Consultation in the Americas concluded with the presence of **Minister Jorge Carrillo** and **Ms. Shelley Cheatham**.