

The XXV INSARAG Americas Regional Meeting was held alongside the Fourth INSARAG Global Meeting in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, on 7-8 July 2026. The event was generously hosted by the Government of Brazil. A total of 45 participants, both in person and online, attended the meeting, representing 14 countries and territories: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru. Participants also represented five regional and partner organizations: CAPRADE (Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Response), CEPREDENAC (Coordination Center for the Prevention of Disasters in Central America and the Dominican Republic), Mayday NGO, OBA (Organization of American Firefighters), and the Swiss Cooperation for Latin America and the Caribbean. The list of participants is included in ([Annex A](#)) and the presentation slides and meeting recordings are available in ([Annex B](#)).

Day 1

Session 1 - Regional Meeting Welcome and Official Opening of the Americas Regional Meeting

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya, Director General of Civil Protection, Prevention and Disaster Mitigation of El Salvador and INSARAG Americas Regional Chair 2026, welcomed all participants attending both in person and online. He thanked the INSARAG Secretariat for organizing the meeting and expressed appreciation to Brazil for hosting the event and providing excellent support to the participants. Mr. Amaya emphasized that there are many important issues to discuss regarding urban search and rescue and highlighted the need for all members to actively engage at the conceptual, operational, and administrative levels. He stressed that greater participation and collaboration will strengthen the region and enhance collective disaster response capacities.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham, Head of Office, OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), welcomed participants and reflected on the humanitarian challenges faced across the region. She highlighted the importance of reinforcing rapid response mechanisms and demonstrated appreciation for INSARAG members and partners for their commitment and dedicated efforts in emergency operations. Ms. Cheatham emphasized the importance of collective action in addressing complex humanitarian crises and recognized recent achievements within the network, including the classification and reclassification processes of regional USAR teams. She further noted the increasing impact of climate-related hazards, and stressed the importance of innovation, solidarity, and regional cooperation as the Americas region prepares its future workplan and leadership priorities.

Colonel Jonas Emmanuel Benghi Pinto, Deputy Commander of the Paraná Fire Department, welcomed participants to Brazil and expressed the country's pride in hosting the meeting. He underscored the value of regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning within the INSARAG network. Colonel Pinto congratulated Ecuador on its recent international classification and Colombia on its successful reclassification, recognizing both countries' commitment to operational excellence and preparedness. He also highlighted Brazil's ongoing efforts towards the classification of its own USAR capacity, and acknowledged the contributions of Paraná, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo in that process. Furthermore, he recognized the progress of countries participating in the IRNAP process and reaffirmed Brazil's commitment to supporting regional partners in strengthening national capacities. Concluding his remarks, Colonel Pinto emphasized the need for innovation, technological advancement, and preparedness to address emerging disaster risks, particularly those associated

with climate-related events, and encouraged the region to remain proactive in developing solutions for future challenges.

Mr. Lucien Jaggi, INSARAG Secretariat, welcomed participants and expressed appreciation for the strong regional engagement demonstrated during a period of significant humanitarian challenges. He highlighted the importance of strengthening response capacities, fostering collaboration among regional and international partners, and supporting countries through INSARAG guidance, training, and coordination mechanisms. Mr. Jaggi emphasized that crises also create opportunities for innovation and improvement and noted the Secretariat's commitment to supporting the implementation of regional priorities and work plans. He acknowledged the participation of countries from across the region, and encouraged continued cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and active engagement within the INSARAG network.

Following the introduction of the participants, as well as the adoption of the agenda ([Annex C](#)), the group moved to take a group photo ([Annex D](#)).

Session 2 - Global and Regional 2026 Workplans and Updates

Global Updates

Mr. Lucien Jaggi, INSARAG Secretariat, provided an update on global INSARAG activities and priorities. He highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships across the humanitarian community, including collaboration with a wide range of international organizations and response stakeholders. Mr. Jaggi emphasized that the current strategic focus remains on quality assurance, standardization, and strengthening operational capacities across the network. He reviewed the global calendar of activities, noting the significant number of classification and reclassification processes conducted during the year, as well as ongoing training opportunities and regional exercises. He also presented updated global statistics on INSARAG-classified USAR teams and encouraged countries interested in strengthening national search and rescue capabilities to continue engaging in the INSARAG classification process. Mr. Jaggi further recognized the role of mentors, partner countries, and regional cooperation mechanisms in supporting capacity development and implementation efforts worldwide.

Regional updates

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya, Director General of Civil Protection, Prevention and Disaster Mitigation of El Salvador and INSARAG Americas Regional Chair 2026, presented the regional workplan progress and key activities undertaken throughout the year. He recalled the regional teleconference held at the beginning of the year to review and update the workplan and acknowledged the support provided by the outgoing regional leadership and the incoming chairmanship of Peru. Mr. Amaya highlighted discussions held by the Regional Steering Group, including planning for the annual regional exercise and ensuring broad participation from member countries.

Mr. Amaya congratulated Colombia on its successful reclassification and Ecuador on the classification of the EQ-01 team, recognizing both achievements as important milestones for the region. He also encouraged teams currently preparing for classification processes and expressed the Regional Chair's support for their continued efforts.

Regarding USAR and Gender, Mr. Amaya emphasized the importance of increasing women's participation across all search and rescue structures, and highlighted the positive impact of gender awareness and sensitization efforts within response operations. He noted that lessons learned during the recent response to the earthquake in Venezuela demonstrated the value of integrating gender considerations into humanitarian operations. He also informed participants that El Salvador remained engaged in Venezuela through post-disaster assessment activities and support in areas such as water, sanitation, and hygiene.

The Regional Chair further reported on training and capacity-building initiatives undertaken during the year, including participation in USAR coordination courses and ongoing efforts to organize an IRNAP Coordinators and Leaders Course in El Salvador. He indicated that planning was underway to identify the most suitable dates, while considering other regional and global commitments.

Concerning the IRNAP process, Mr. Amaya noted ongoing advocacy efforts with several countries in the region, particularly Honduras, to encourage greater participation in the recognition process. He also announced El Salvador's intention to formally submit its request to begin the national IRNAP process following the completion of the upcoming regional exercise.

Mr. Amaya also addressed initiatives related to capacity strengthening and regional cooperation, including efforts to align regional activities with disaster assistance programs and enhance collaboration with key operational partners. He formally requested that the INSARAG Secretariat issue invitations for participation in the upcoming ERE Exercise, scheduled to take place in El Salvador during the second week of December.

Finally, Mr. Amaya emphasized the importance of continuing regional discussions on flexible response capacities for flood emergencies, noting the increasing vulnerability of the Americas to flooding and other climate-related hazards. While recognizing the region's continued exposure to seismic risks, he encouraged member countries to strengthen preparedness and operational capabilities for flood response, promote specialized training opportunities, and maintain this topic as a regional priority moving forward.

Following the presentations, participants were invited to provide comments or observations regarding the implementation of the global and regional workplans. No additional comments were raised, and the meeting proceeded to the next agenda item.

Session 3 - Updates from the Team Leaders Meeting 2026

Mr. Lucien Jaggi, INSARAG Secretariat, provided an update on the outcomes of the 2026 Team Leaders Meeting. He emphasized the importance of maintaining up-to-date contact information and leadership structures within USAR teams to ensure effective communication and coordination across the INSARAG network. Mr. Jaggi informed participants about ongoing organizational developments within the Secretariat and regional structures aimed at strengthening support mechanisms and improving integration with existing INSARAG working groups and systems.

Mr. Jaggi highlighted the development of future projects, including work related to ICMS 3.0, and encouraged interested experts from the region to contribute to the corresponding working groups. He reported that several policy and guidance documents are currently under review, including checklists and operational recommendations, and noted that feedback received from team leaders and working groups would continue to inform these processes.

The Secretariat also presented updates regarding discussions held during the Team Leaders Meeting on operational guidance, working site management, leadership responsibilities, and mechanisms for strengthening cooperation among teams. Mr. Jaggi emphasized the importance of continued engagement from regional representatives and acknowledged the valuable feedback provided by participants on operational challenges and areas requiring further clarification and improvement.

Regarding classification activities, Mr. Jaggi noted the increasing number of INSARAG classification and reclassification processes and stressed the need for more efficient and flexible approaches to manage future demands. He explained that the Secretariat is working to improve the allocation of classifiers and support personnel by enhancing planning processes and identifying qualified experts available to support upcoming evaluations.

Mr. Jaggi also highlighted ongoing discussions concerning representation within global and regional structures, reaffirming the importance of balanced regional participation. In addition, he addressed efforts to strengthen communication across the network, including the growing use of WhatsApp community groups, which proved particularly valuable during the recent response to Venezuela. He noted that these communication platforms have facilitated the rapid exchange of information, operational updates, and technical products among members of the INSARAG community.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to provide comments, questions, and observations regarding the outcomes of the Team Leaders Meeting. No additional interventions were raised, and the session concluded with a short coffee break before the continuation of the agenda.

Session 4 – Updates from the INSARAG Working Groups

The Training, IEC/R Quality Assurance, Information Management, Medical, and Search Working Groups provided updates on their activities, including recent meetings, ongoing projects, and plans for future training and exercises.

The Guidelines Review Group did not present their results in this session as they had a dedicated session later.

Medical Working Group (WG)

Mr. Lucien Jaggi, INSARAG Secretariat, presented the expected outcomes of the Medical Working Group on behalf of Mr. Hector Fuentes. These include ongoing efforts to strengthen and clarify the medical dimension of INSARAG operations and classifications.

He reported that the Working Group had finalized documentation clarifying host nation acceptance of all components of deployed USAR teams and had contributed updates to INSARAG guidelines, manuals and checklists. The WG continues to emphasize the importance of medical support throughout the rescue process, from victim identification through to extrication and immediate care.

Additional work includes clarifying the distinction between victim assessment and patient treatment documentation, promoting recognition of USAR medicine as an essential humanitarian activity, and improving operational awareness of crush syndrome management. Progress was also reported on a range of technical reference notes covering topics such as particulate exposure, impalement injuries, infection prevention and control, immunization, mental health and wellbeing, post-mission health monitoring, pre-deployment health screening, medical reporting requirements and oxygen transport and ventilation during deployments.

During the discussion, it was noted that some proposed medical scenarios had been simplified within the classification process to ensure exercises remain realistic and manageable, while retaining critical capabilities such as crush syndrome management, amputations and impalement scenarios.

IEC/R Quality Assurance Working Group

Ms. Annika Coll (Spain), Chair of the IEC/R Quality Assurance Working Group, presented an update on the activities and achievements of the group. She recalled that 2025 marked the twentieth anniversary of the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) and Reclassification (IER) system, recognizing two decades of quality assurance efforts within the INSARAG network. She explained that the Working Group was established in 2019 following a global review of the classification and reclassification process, with the objective of strengthening quality assurance and ensuring continuous improvement of the system.

Ms. Coll outlined the Working Group's mandate, which includes reviewing and improving the classification and reclassification process, updating the INSARAG Checklist, supporting the development and preparation of classifiers, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in the process, and assisting the INSARAG Secretariat in matters related to quality assurance. She also encouraged greater participation from the Americas and Asia-Pacific regions, noting that current membership is heavily concentrated in Europe, and that increased regional representation would contribute to a more balanced perspective.

She reported that the Working Group had completed the review of the INSARAG Guidelines related to classification and reclassification processes and had finalized a revised version of the INSARAG Checklist, which is expected to be submitted for endorsement at a future INSARAG Steering Group meeting. Additional work is underway to strengthen classifier training through standardized learning opportunities, improve clarity regarding application procedures for classification and reclassification, and review the format and content requirements of the Portfolio of Evidence (PoE).

Ms. Coll explained that the revision of the Checklist was undertaken to address areas that had generated differing interpretations among teams and classifiers, to facilitate the integration of emerging technologies into USAR operations, and to refocus assessments on the achievement of operational outcomes rather than the specific methods or tools employed. She noted that efforts were also made to reduce unnecessary costs for teams while maintaining the required quality standards.

Among the principal changes proposed in the revised Checklist are a more logical and chronological structure, clearer terminology to reduce ambiguity, incorporation of decisions previously adopted by the INSARAG Steering Group, greater consideration of national legal frameworks, increased flexibility regarding the use of technologies, adjustments to equipment requirements to reduce costs, and modifications to rope rescue and exercise-duration requirements to improve practicality while preserving operational standards.

During the discussion, Mr. Gabriel Alejandro Rodríguez Racines, Team Leader of ECU-01, Quito Metropolitan Fire Department, raised concerns regarding the need to further standardize assessment criteria among classifiers. He noted that some evaluation teams have applied excessively detailed interpretations during classifications, sometimes extending to aspects beyond the intended scope of the Checklist. He emphasized the importance of ensuring consistent criteria across all evaluation teams and supported the development of additional training for classifiers to reduce variations in interpretation.

Mr. Rodríguez also highlighted the need for greater clarity regarding canine search requirements, including expectations related to redundancy, the number of certified search dogs required, and veterinary support arrangements during classification processes. He suggested that these elements be reviewed to ensure common interpretation and implementation by both teams and classifiers.

In response, Ms. Coll acknowledged the concerns raised and agreed that additional guidance could be incorporated to clarify the intended interpretation and philosophy of the Checklist. She noted that further efforts to harmonize evaluation criteria could form part of future classifier training and guidance materials, helping

ensure that assessments focus on minimum operational requirements and avoid unnecessary inconsistencies between evaluation teams.

Following the discussion, participants thanked Ms. Coll for her presentation and for the ongoing work of the IEC/R Quality Assurance Working Group in strengthening the quality and consistency of INSARAG classification and reclassification processes.

Training Working Group (WG)

Mr. Andrew Shurety, Member of the Training Working Group (WG), presented the expected outcomes of the WG. These include ongoing efforts to strengthen training and capacity development across the INSARAG network, with a particular focus on classifier, mentor, and team leader development. He reported that discussions had taken place on proposed amendments to the triage form; however, the prevailing view was that the current system remains fit for purpose and does not require significant revision.

Mr. Shurety highlighted the importance of ensuring that participants nominated for classifier and leadership training meet the established prerequisites, noting the significant investment associated with these courses and their role in developing future mentors, classifiers and team leaders. He also provided an update on the INSARAG training directory, encouraging teams to share information on training facilities, exercise opportunities, and courses available to other network members to strengthen international cooperation and interoperability.

Additional priorities identified by the WG include support for earthquake response exercises (EREs), coordination of training activities through national focal points and the Secretariat, enhancement of coordination capabilities and digital information management competencies, and continued promotion of INSARAG guidance materials. Mr. Shurety emphasized the importance of broader participation in the Training Working Group and invited qualified members of the network to contribute to its activities.

Information Management Working Group (IMWG)

Mr. Peter Wolff, co-Chair of the Working Group, presented an update from the Information Management Working Group (IMWG). He outlined the WG's ongoing efforts to develop and promote efficient information management systems that support coordination, situational awareness, and decision-making during international USAR operations.

Also, he presented the development of the Information Coordination and Management System (ICMS) 3.0, which has been designed in response to lessons identified during recent major disaster responses, including the Türkiye earthquake. The new system aims to simplify data collection, improve operational flexibility, significantly reduce reporting times, lower bandwidth requirements, and integrate both digital and offline operational workflows. Following successful testing and endorsement by the Team Leaders Meeting, ICMS 3.0 is scheduled for phased implementation, supported by online training modules, user manuals, and in-person training opportunities.

He also highlighted several related initiatives by the IMWG, including the redesign of the INSARAG website, modernization of the Virtual OSOCC platform, development of enhanced mapping and imagery capabilities, reinstatement of logistics functionalities, automated reporting tools, and future digital solutions to support IEC/R processes. The WG will continue to provide technical support, training, and operational assistance to the network while working to ensure all teams transition successfully to ICMS 3.0.

Day 2

Session 5 - Recap of Day One and Agenda for Day Two

Mr. Lucien Jaggi recaped the previous day and presented the agenda for Day 2.

Session 6– Americas Regional Updates 2026

Updates on Regional Americas SAR in Floods Response Working Group

Mr. Carlos Tornquist, Co-Chair of the Americas Flood Response Working Group and representative of the Chile Fire Service, presented an update on the progress achieved by the Regional Americas SAR in Floods Response Working Group since its establishment. He highlighted that the Working Group has focused on advancing the strategic objectives established by INSARAG through regional coordination, capacity-building initiatives, and the promotion of operational readiness for flood response. Mr. Tornquist reported that two regional meetings of the Working Group have been conducted, including sessions held in Curitiba and Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil. He noted that efforts have also been made to promote bilateral cooperation and capacity development through practical training activities. As an example, he presented a bilateral workshop conducted between Chile and the Paraná Fire Department in Brazil in December 2025, which focused on operational safety, interoperability, and technical exchanges related to flood and water rescue operations.

The workshop included practical exercises covering river-crossing operations, self-rescue techniques, victim rescue in moving water, inflatable boat operations, and the use of motorized rescue craft, such as Zodiac boats and jet skis. Mr. Tornquist emphasized that flood response operations involve significant risks and underscored the importance of maintaining high standards of personal protective equipment, specialized training, and operational procedures. He stressed that responders operating in flood environments require specific competencies and should not be deployed without appropriate training and qualifications.

The Working Group also reviewed the need to strengthen participation and engagement among regional members. Mr. Tornquist acknowledged that attendance and continuity within the Working Group have been inconsistent and noted plans to renew and expand membership in order to ensure broader representation and more active participation from countries across the Americas. In discussing operational preparedness, Mr. Tornquist presented the current INSARAG directory of flood response capacities within the region and encouraged additional countries to register and share their capabilities. He highlighted the importance of maintaining a robust regional capability given the frequency and impact of flood emergencies throughout the Americas. He further noted that rapid deployment is essential in flood operations and emphasized the value of strengthening regional cooperation to ensure timely and effective assistance. Mr. Tornquist also highlighted the need to establish stronger links with the Organization of American Firefighters (OBA) and other regional partners to support capacity development and cooperation initiatives. He reiterated that the Working Group intends to align its efforts with the guidance and priorities established by the Global Flood Response Working Group, ensuring consistency and avoiding duplication of efforts.

During the discussion, Mr. Henry Frank Dubois Curcio, INSARAG Operational Focal Point for Peru and Director of Response at INDECI, welcomed the initiative and emphasized the value of conducting bilateral and cross-border flood response exercises. He noted that Peru possesses numerous high-flow rivers, similar to those found in Brazil, and expressed interest in developing joint training activities with neighboring countries, particularly Chile, to strengthen operational preparedness and interoperability.

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya, Director General of Civil Protection, Prevention and Disaster Mitigation of El Salvador and Americas Regional Chair 2026, congratulated the Working Group on its progress and highlighted the growing importance of flood rescue capabilities for countries throughout the region. He noted that, in Central America, specialized flood rescue certification opportunities remain limited and emphasized El Salvador's interest in expanding access to training and qualification processes. Mr. Amaya expressed interest in learning more about existing certification systems and training methodologies in order to further strengthen national and regional capacities. He also highlighted El Salvador's experience participating in international flood response activities and reaffirmed the country's commitment to advancing flood response preparedness.

Responding to the discussion, Mr. Tornquist explained that flood rescue remains a relatively new specialty in many countries, and that certification approaches vary considerably across the region. He noted that, in Chile, efforts are underway to institutionalize flood rescue training and certification through the National Fire Academy, reducing reliance on private certification providers, and promoting nationally recognized standards. He stressed that the increasing frequency and severity of flood events continue to drive demand for more specialized training and operational capabilities.

Ms. Claudinne Ogaldes, INSARAG Policy Focal Point and UNDAC Focal Point for Guatemala and Executive Secretary of CONRED, congratulated the Working Group and requested information on how Guatemala could become more actively involved in its activities. She highlighted the recurring impact of floods on communities in Guatemala and noted that response operations are frequently conducted without specialized technical knowledge. Ms. Ogaldes expressed interest in accessing training opportunities and participating in future Working Group initiatives.

In response, Mr. Tornquist welcomed Guatemala's interest and explained that the Working Group intends to launch a renewed call for membership in order to increase participation and strengthen regional representation. He encouraged additional countries to join the initiative and contribute to the development of a stronger and more collaborative regional network for flood response preparedness and operations.

The discussion concluded with participants reaffirming the importance of regional collaboration, technical exchange, and the development of specialized flood response capabilities. The Working Group reiterated its commitment to supporting capacity-building efforts throughout the Americas and to aligning regional initiatives with global INSARAG guidance and priorities.

Updates on Gender Considerations in USAR operations

Ms. Andrea Rojas Van Dyck, Executive Director of the Organization of American Firefighters (OBA) and INSARAG partner, provided an update on initiatives jointly implemented by OBA and INSARAG to promote gender inclusion and strengthen gender considerations within USAR operations across the Americas.

Ms. Rojas presented an overview of OBA, highlighting its role as one of the largest international cooperation organizations for fire and emergency services in the Americas. She explained that OBA currently includes 77 member organizations across 16 countries, and maintains active partnerships with several international organizations, including INSARAG, UN Women, the Inter-American Development Bank, NFPA, UNESCO, and other emergency response networks.

She reported that OBA and INSARAG have been collaborating on USAR and Gender initiatives since 2024, focusing on awareness, inclusion, knowledge sharing, and operational integration of gender perspectives within emergency response activities. This collaboration has included the organization of regional webinars, the development of reports, and the promotion of dialogue among practitioners and decision-makers across the region.

Ms. Rojas highlighted the work undertaken through OBA's Special Commission for Equality and its Gender and Diversity Committee (CEPIC), which have supported the development of educational activities, webinars, research, protocols, and awareness initiatives related to women's participation in emergency services and disaster response. She presented the results of the first regional webinar, "Gender Perspective in Urban Search and Rescue Operations," which gathered approximately 250 participants at its peak attendance and included significant participation from both women and men. Through surveys and participant feedback, the initiative identified several key challenges affecting women in USAR operations, including persistent cultural barriers, gender stereotypes, and the lack of personal protective equipment and uniforms designed for diverse body types. The webinar also identified positive practices across the region, including increased recognition of women in leadership and operational roles, as well as the importance of continuous technical and professional development opportunities. Based on participant feedback, recommendations were developed to strengthen gender considerations within operational procedures, update relevant policies, and establish mentorship programs to support the development of future generations of female responders and leaders.

Ms. Rojas also presented the outcomes of the second regional webinar, "Strength and Resilience: Women in the Operational Field in Latin America," conducted in 2025. The event attracted more than 400 live participants and generated considerable engagement through subsequent online dissemination. Discussions focused on the management of sensitive information and communications, the responsible use of images on social media, and the prevention of harassment and inappropriate behavior within digital and operational environments. She reported that, collectively, the first two webinars reached nearly 700 live participants, generated tens of thousands of online engagements and multimedia views, and demonstrated growing regional interest in gender-related issues within emergency operations. Looking ahead, Ms. Rojas emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender considerations throughout the entire operational cycle of USAR activities. She noted that OBA and INSARAG continue to work toward integrating gender perspectives and protection measures into preparedness, response, and recovery activities, while strengthening regional networks and promoting inclusive operational environments. Ms. Rojas reaffirmed OBA's commitment to supporting INSARAG and emergency service organizations throughout the Americas by contributing technical expertise, facilitating training opportunities, sharing good practices, and supporting the development of recommendations and operational protocols related to gender inclusion and diversity.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to raise questions or comments. No interventions were made by participants, and the Regional Meeting expressed appreciation to Ms. Rojas and OBA for their continued collaboration and support in advancing gender considerations within USAR operations across the Americas.

Updates on Regional Americas National Capacity Building Working Group

Mr. Diego Caruezo, INSARAG Operational Focal Point for Chile and Chair of the Regional Americas National Capacity Building Working Group, presented an update on the progress of the Working Group and its efforts to strengthen national USAR capacities across the Americas. He emphasized that the development of national response capabilities remains a fundamental priority, recognizing that the first lifesaving actions after a disaster are almost always carried out by local and national responders. Based on this principle, the Working Group has focused on promoting sustainable national capacity development before progressing to international response capabilities. Mr. Caruezo recalled that the Americas region has played a significant role in the development and implementation of the INSARAG National Accreditation Process (NAP) and the INSARAG Recognition of National Accreditation Process (IRNAP). He highlighted that the Regional Working Group was formally established to complement and support the objectives of the Global National Capacity Building Working Group (NCBWG), while facilitating more agile and practical cooperation among countries of the region. The Chair

explained that the overall objective of the Working Group is to support the strengthening of national USAR systems in alignment with INSARAG methodologies and guidelines, enabling more effective and efficient disaster response capacities throughout the Americas. Key priorities include promoting the exchange of experiences and best practices, supporting countries in the development and implementation of NAP and IRNAP processes, strengthening training opportunities, and encouraging collaboration among INSARAG focal points and national authorities.

Mr. Caruezo presented the structure of the Working Group, including its coordination team and regional membership composed of representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, and other participating countries. He stressed that the group seeks to leverage the expertise available throughout the region while maintaining close coordination with INSARAG's global structures. The Working Group's priorities for 2026 include contributing regional perspectives to the review and development of Volume II of the INSARAG Guidelines, supporting countries in their national capacity-building roadmaps, promoting national accreditation and quality assurance processes, strengthening coordination mechanisms between national and international response structures, and reinforcing national legal and administrative frameworks that enable effective USAR operations. Mr. Caruezo underlined the importance of establishing strong national systems capable of integrating with international response mechanisms. He noted that one of the key lessons learned from recent emergencies is the need to improve coordination between national authorities and incoming international teams. He emphasized that countries must be prepared not only to deploy their own response resources but also to effectively receive and coordinate international assistance when required.

The presentation also highlighted the availability of regional expertise and mentorship support for countries interested in developing national accreditation systems. Mr. Caruezo reiterated that technical assistance within the INSARAG network is based on cooperation and solidarity, with member countries supporting one another without cost through mentoring, training, and the exchange of good practices.

Addressing emerging challenges, Mr. Caruezo emphasized the importance of adopting a multi-hazard approach to capacity development. He noted that the organizational structures, coordination mechanisms, and quality assurance principles developed for USAR operations can also support responses to other hazards, including floods and water-related emergencies. He shared examples from Chile, where USAR methodologies have been adapted to strengthen national flood response capacities and support broader emergency management efforts. The Working Group's planned outputs for 2026–2027 include the development of regional training packages on NAP, IRNAP, and coordination mechanisms; the review of future INSARAG Guidelines; a regional assessment of national USAR capacities; support to pilot countries undertaking NAP and IRNAP processes; a repository of regional best practices and lessons learned; and the establishment of a calendar of training and exchange activities designed to strengthen cooperation throughout the Americas. Mr. Caruezo concluded by reaffirming that strong national capacities are the foundation of effective international response mechanisms. He stressed that coordination remains the critical element of successful disaster response and emphasized that strengthening national systems will ultimately enhance the region's ability to support both domestic and international emergency operations.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to raise questions or comments. No interventions were made, and the session concluded with participants expressing appreciation for the Working Group's efforts and commitment to strengthening national USAR capacities throughout the Americas region.

Updates on Regional IRNAP Process

IRNAP Accreditation Honduras

Mr. Luis René Suazo Peña, representing the INSARAG Policy Focal Point of Honduras and serving as Deputy Minister of the National Secretariat for Risk Management and National Contingencies (COPECO), provided an update on Honduras' progress toward the implementation of the INSARAG Recognition of National Accreditation Process (IRNAP). Mr. Suazo reaffirmed Honduras' commitment to becoming an active and valuable member of the INSARAG network and highlighted the country's ongoing efforts to advance through a structured and progressive process aligned with INSARAG guidelines and standards. He emphasized that Honduras is approaching the accreditation process realistically, taking into consideration the country's current capacities, operational requirements, and vulnerability profile as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the region. He presented a roadmap of activities that Honduras has planned and is implementing as part of its IRNAP preparation process. These actions include the official recognition of the national USAR programme, technical exchanges with regional partners, the development and refinement of urban search and rescue protocols, the establishment of coordination and training mechanisms, and the implementation of national capacity-building activities.

Mr. Suazo noted that Honduras' increasing participation in regional and international INSARAG activities reflects the country's commitment to strengthening disaster preparedness and response capabilities. He emphasized that these efforts aim not only to better protect the Honduran population but also to contribute to regional and international emergency response mechanisms in the future. The presentation concluded with Mr. Suazo reiterating Honduras' commitment to continuing its IRNAP journey and thanking regional partners, the INSARAG Secretariat, and participating countries for their support and cooperation throughout the process.

IRNAP Re-accreditation Guatemala

Mr. Josue Cristobal Guzman Tello, INSARAG Operational Focal Point for Guatemala, presented the results of Guatemala's IRNAP Re-accreditation Process and provided an overview of the country's efforts to strengthen and institutionalize national USAR capacities. Mr. Guzman explained that Guatemala initiated its re-accreditation process in 2023, building upon the national accreditation system that was originally recognized in 2019. He emphasized that the objective of the process was not only to maintain national accreditation status but also to further strengthen disaster preparedness and response capabilities across all emergency response institutions in the country. As part of this effort, Guatemala developed and enhanced several national mechanisms, including the National USAR Accreditation Programme, national procedures for specialized USAR operations, and a National USAR Coordination Protocol. These frameworks established common standards, activation procedures, operational coordination mechanisms, and arrangements for the reception and coordination of international assistance.

Mr. Guzman highlighted that these initiatives have contributed to the professionalization of national capacities and the standardization of operational practices among participating institutions. He explained that Guatemala's accreditation system requires teams to comply with standards related to organization, operations, logistics, medical support, and administrative management, while also participating in continuous training, exercises, and periodic evaluations. National exercises are regularly conducted to ensure accredited teams maintain operational readiness and compliance with national and international standards. Mr. Guzman recalled that Guatemala was among the first countries in the region to obtain national accreditation recognition under the former INSARAG recognition process. He described how the re-accreditation effort progressed between 2023 and 2025, overcoming institutional and governmental transitions while maintaining strong commitment from national authorities and participating organizations.

Mr. Guzman acknowledged the significant international support received throughout the process, including mentorship and technical guidance from experts representing Chile, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina, and the United States. Special recognition was given to mentors, evaluators, and advisors who accompanied Guatemala

throughout the different stages of preparation, evaluation, and final verification. The presentation further highlighted the interinstitutional nature of USAR-GUA, Guatemala's national USAR team. The structure brings together multiple emergency response organizations, including the Volunteer Fire Department, Municipal Fire Departments, Departmental Municipal Firefighters, the Humanitarian and Rescue Brigade of the Guatemalan Army, the Guatemalan Red Cross, Firefighters United Without Borders, and the Executive Secretariat of CONRED.

Mr. Guzman emphasized that the reaccreditation process strengthened not only the national team itself, but also the participating institutions and the broader national disaster management system. He reported that, following nearly three years of preparation, exercises, assessments, and continuous improvement efforts, Guatemala successfully completed both the IRNAP Re-accreditation and the reaccreditation of the USARGUA Team. The final evaluation included more than 36 continuous hours of operational activities and assessed capabilities in coordination, heavy lifting and rigging, concrete and metal cutting, structural shoring, rope rescue, technical search, medical operations, logistics, communications, and overall incident management. A video presentation was subsequently shown, illustrating the evaluation process and highlighting the operational capabilities of USARGUA. The video emphasized Guatemala's continued commitment to maintaining internationally recognized standards and its role as a regional leader in urban search and rescue. It also recognized the contribution of all institutions and individuals involved in achieving the successful reaccreditation.

Following the presentation, representatives of the INSARAG Secretariat congratulated Guatemala on this significant achievement and acknowledged the strong national commitment and international cooperation that made the process possible. Appreciation was expressed to the many countries and experts who contributed technical support throughout the reaccreditation journey.

Recognition of Guatemala's IRNAP Reaccreditation

Following the presentation, Ms. Claudinne Ogaldes, INSARAG Policy Focal Point for Guatemala and Executive Secretary of CONRED, received official recognition for Guatemala's successful IRNAP Re-accreditation.

In her acceptance remarks, Ms. Ogaldes expressed gratitude to INSARAG, the participating countries, mentors, evaluators, and all institutions that supported Guatemala throughout the process. She emphasized that the achievement belongs to the seven institutions that collectively form the national USAR structure and reflects a true national effort rather than the accomplishment of a single organization.

Ms. Ogaldes highlighted that Guatemala's next objective is to continue strengthening its national capacity by developing at least two additional nationally accredited teams before pursuing further international classification ambitions. She noted that the recently completed reaccreditation process has created the foundation and expertise needed to support the development of these future teams. She also extended special appreciation to Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Argentina, the United States, and the INSARAG community for their support, guidance, and collaboration throughout the process. Concluding her remarks, Ms. Ogaldes thanked all participants on behalf of the people of Guatemala and reaffirmed the country's commitment to continued capacity development, regional cooperation, and operational excellence within the INSARAG network.

Session 7 – The Road to IEC/IER: Sharing of Experiences

COLOMBIA - IER USAR COL 01

Ms. Silvia Ballén, INSARAG International Cooperation Focal Point and member of USAR COL-01, presented Colombia's experience during the reclassification process of its internationally classified medium USAR team. Ms. Ballén explained that USAR COL-01 was initially classified in 2018 as a medium team and successfully underwent its INSARAG External Reclassification (IER) from 7 to 11 June 2026 in the municipality of Montenegro, Quindío Department. The process included a 36-hour operational exercise conducted under INSARAG methodology and standards.

She highlighted that Colombia maintains a strong national structure for urban search and rescue, built upon a nationally recognized accreditation system that was the first in the Americas to receive INSARAG recognition in 2018. The national system currently includes 23 accredited USAR teams, providing a pool of approximately 1,000 qualified responders from which the 160 members of USAR COL-01 are selected. The deployed team consists of 64 operational members and four search dogs, supported by a larger roster that ensures personnel redundancy and operational sustainability. USAR COL-01 is a multiagency team composed of representatives from the Colombian Red Cross, Civil Defense, municipal fire services, National Police, Armed Forces, Navy, and the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD). Ms. Ballén emphasized that maintaining interoperability among seven institutions while ensuring a common operational language and methodology remains one of the team's greatest strengths and challenges.

The reclassification process included both a document review phase in Bogotá and a full-scale operational exercise in Quindío. Colombia also benefits from a dedicated USAR training facility specifically constructed for classification exercises and designed according to INSARAG standards. The facility has been continuously adapted to reflect updates in INSARAG Guidelines and operational requirements.

During the presentation, Ms. Ballén highlighted several key lessons learned from the reclassification process. These included the development of a standardized national canine search methodology, the incorporation of veterinary support within team operations, and the integration of psychological support and mental health protocols. She noted that USAR COL-01 includes a psychologist as a permanent member of the team, contributing to responder wellbeing, stress management, and post-deployment support. She further recognized the support provided by the INSARAG Secretariat and the international classification team throughout the multi-year preparation process. The collaborative approach helped strengthen both technical capabilities and organizational readiness in advance of the evaluation. Ms. Ballén emphasized that the successful reclassification of USAR COL-01 represents more than a technical achievement. It reaffirms Colombia's commitment to maintaining a highly qualified response capability capable of supporting disaster operations throughout the Americas and beyond. She noted that the team's capacity was demonstrated shortly after the reclassification process through its deployment to the earthquake response in Venezuela.

A video highlighting the preparation process and the reclassification exercise was presented to participants. The video documented months of training, multiple simulation exercises, technical evaluations, and 36 continuous hours of operational assessment. It emphasized the importance of interagency cooperation, continuous improvement, and dedication to serving populations affected by disasters.

The Regional Meeting congratulated Colombia on its successful reclassification and recognized the country's continued leadership and contribution to strengthening USAR capacities across the Americas.

ECUADOR – IEC USAR ECU-01

Ms. Daniela Reyes, supporting the INSARAG Operational Focal Point of Ecuador, and Mr. Gabriel Alejandro Rodríguez Racines, Team Leader of USAR ECU-01, presented Ecuador's experience on its pathway toward international classification.

Ms. Reyes outlined the development of Ecuador's national disaster management framework and the progressive incorporation of INSARAG methodologies into the country's search and rescue system. She explained that Ecuador strengthened its disaster management architecture through the establishment of the National Secretariat for Risk Management and, subsequently, through the development of policies and structures designed to support specialized emergency response capabilities.

A key milestone in Ecuador's development was the country's incorporation into the INSARAG network in 2013. This engagement enabled Ecuador to deepen its understanding of international USAR coordination methodologies and contributed significantly to national capacity-building efforts.

Ms. Reyes noted that the 2016 Ecuador earthquake represented a major turning point for the country. The response identified challenges related to coordination, operational management, engagement with international teams, and the lack of common national standards. These lessons became the foundation for a comprehensive effort to strengthen Ecuador's national USAR framework. As a direct result, Ecuador established a National Technical Committee for Search and Rescue and developed its first National Accreditation Guide for USAR Teams. Through the contributions of technical experts from fire services, police, transportation agencies, and other institutions, the country developed a national accreditation system aligned with INSARAG principles while adapted to national realities.

Ecuador subsequently pursued recognition of its national accreditation process and successfully obtained IRNAP recognition in 2023. This process included two nationally accredited medium teams: ECU-01 (Quito Fire Department) and ECU-02 (Guayaquil Fire Department). Ms. Reyes reported that Ecuador currently maintains eight nationally accredited USAR teams, including three light teams and five medium teams, comprising approximately 428 rescuers. The country also operates a national accreditation process for canine search teams.

Mr. Gabriel Rodríguez then described the experience of USAR ECU-01 during its journey toward international classification. He explained that the process began with an assessment supported through international cooperation and mentorship that helped identify strengths and areas requiring improvement. Based on these findings, the team implemented corrective actions, strengthened operational capabilities, and refined procedures in preparation for the classification exercise. Mr. Rodríguez highlighted the considerable effort required across all operational components to meet INSARAG standards. The preparation process involved continuous training, equipment improvements, procedural adjustments, and extensive coordination among team members and supporting institutions. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining readiness in every detail of the process, including personnel health, logistics, command and control, technical rescue capabilities, search operations, medical support, and overall organizational management. According to Mr. Rodríguez, successful classification was achieved through continuous commitment, disciplined preparation, and strong institutional support from both the Quito Fire Department and Ecuador's national disaster management system.

Participants congratulated Ecuador on the successful classification of USAR ECU-01 and recognized the country's significant progress in building national capacities, strengthening its accreditation system, and advancing toward greater regional and international engagement within the INSARAG network.

Session 8 - Americas Regional Workplan 2027 Consultations

Participants conducted a plenary discussion on the development of the Americas Regional Workplan 2027, ensuring alignment with the three strategic objectives established in the INSARAG Strategy 2026–2030: Quality Standards, Flexible Response, and Strengthening Localization.

At the start of the session, Mr. Henry Frank Dubois Curcio, INSARAG Operational Focal Point for Peru and Director of Response at INDECI, delivered introductory remarks on behalf of Peru, which will assume the INSARAG Americas Regional Chairmanship for 2027. He reaffirmed Peru's commitment to strengthening regional cooperation, preparedness, interoperability, accreditation processes, and capacity development throughout the Americas. Mr. Dubois highlighted the importance of joint exercises, knowledge exchange, and coordinated action in response to increasingly complex disasters affecting the region. He also emphasized Peru's intention to promote an open, collaborative, and results-oriented leadership approach during its upcoming chairmanship and expressed appreciation to OCHA, the INSARAG Secretariat, and all member countries for their continued support and engagement.

Ms. Katherine Barreto subsequently facilitated the consultation process, presenting the preliminary framework of activities currently envisioned for 2027. Participants reviewed the continuation of several recurring regional activities, including regional teleconferences, Team Leaders Meetings, participation in INSARAG global meetings, the annual Americas Regional Meeting, regional coordination activities in conjunction with partner organizations, and support for ongoing classification and accreditation processes across the region.

The discussion focused on identifying additional activities and priorities under the three strategic objectives of the INSARAG Strategy 2026–2030.

Under Strategic Objective 1: Quality Standards, participants emphasized the need to continue supporting classification, reclassification, NAP, and IRNAP activities, while expanding opportunities for technical exchange and training. Reference was made to several capacity-building initiatives already under development, including a regional instructor development course proposed by Colombia and continued support to ongoing classification processes within the region, including the anticipated classification of Ecuador's second team (ECU-02).

During the discussion, representatives highlighted the importance of continuing efforts related to the USAR and Gender initiative. Participants noted the progress achieved through previous webinars and regional exchanges and supported the continuation of activities aimed at documenting lessons learned and developing recommendations that could contribute to future improvements within INSARAG guidance and regional practices.

Under Strategic Objective 2: Flexible Response, participants identified flood response as a continued regional priority. Building upon the work of the Americas Flood Response Working Group, several countries emphasized the need for additional training opportunities, technical exchanges, and practical exercises focused on flood rescue operations. The importance of maintaining collaboration with Chile, Brazil, and other countries with advanced flood response capabilities was highlighted as a means of strengthening regional preparedness and interoperability.

Ms. Claudinne Ogaldes, INSARAG Policy Focal Point for Guatemala and Executive Secretary of CONRED, stressed the importance of integrating lessons learned from recent emergency responses into future planning efforts. Participants agreed that the experiences and lessons emerging from the response to the Venezuela earthquake should be carefully reviewed and that resulting recommendations could help inform future activities under both the Flexible Response and Quality Standards objectives.

Ms. Annie Ste-Croix, INSARAG Operational Focal Point for Canada and Manager of the National Search and Rescue Secretariat at Public Safety Canada, recalled Canada's previous contribution related to responder wellbeing and post-traumatic stress injury management. Participants recognized the value of this initiative and discussed the possibility of incorporating similar activities within future regional workplans to strengthen responder resilience and support systems throughout the network.

During the consultation, Mr. Lucien Jaggi, INSARAG Secretariat, informed participants that a structured review of the Venezuela response would be conducted in the coming months. Several participants supported incorporating the findings of this review into future planning discussions, noting that it would provide valuable lessons and recommendations for regional preparedness, coordination, and operational readiness. Additional proposals emerging from the Team Leaders Meeting were also discussed, including the possibility of organizing a dedicated virtual meeting of Team Leaders during the year to enhance communication and maintain momentum between annual meetings. Participants also noted the upcoming development of guidance related to flexible response capacities and recognized that the Americas region could play an active role in contributing to this work.

Following discussion, participants agreed that the draft Americas Regional Workplan 2027 would be circulated by the Secretariat and Regional Chair for further review and comment. Countries would be invited to submit additional proposals, training opportunities, workshops, and initiatives for consideration. The session concluded with broad agreement on the proposed direction of the workplan and recognition that continued engagement from all member countries would be essential for achieving the strategic objectives of the Americas region under Peru's forthcoming leadership.

Session 9 - USAR Response: Sharing Experiences

Ecuador – USAR ECU-01

Mr. Gabriel Rodríguez Racines, Team Leader of USAR ECU-01 and Captain of the Quito Metropolitan Fire Department, presented Ecuador's experience during the international response to the earthquake in Venezuela.

Mr. Rodríguez began by expressing solidarity with the people of Venezuela and recognizing the efforts being undertaken by national authorities and international responders. He reported that USAR ECU-01 was among the first international teams to arrive in-country and highlighted the importance of the initial deployment phase, including the establishment of coordination structures and integration within the INSARAG system.

He noted that one of the main challenges encountered during the initial stages of the response was the limited familiarity of some authorities with INSARAG methodologies and structures, particularly regarding the roles and functions of the RDC and UCC. According to Mr. Rodríguez, this created delays and misunderstandings during the reception and deployment of international teams. Drawing from Ecuador's own experience during the 2016 earthquake, he emphasized the importance of ensuring that INSARAG Policy and Operational Focal Points possess a strong understanding of INSARAG methodologies and international coordination mechanisms. Mr. Rodríguez explained that once coordination structures were established and became operational, the deployment process improved significantly.

Ecuador coordinated closely with other classified teams and worked through the UCC and the operational coordination cells established in the affected area. He highlighted the value of interoperability among INSARAG-classified teams and noted that technical cooperation, including the use of different search technologies and canine resources, helped strengthen operational decision-making and validation of search results. Among the lessons identified, Mr. Rodríguez stressed the importance of avoiding duplication of efforts, maintaining adherence to coordination mechanisms, and ensuring that all responding teams operate within the established structure. He emphasized that independent actions outside the coordination system generate confusion and affect the efficiency of response operations. He therefore encouraged continued efforts to strengthen training and awareness of INSARAG methodologies throughout the region. Mr. Rodríguez reported that ECU-01

successfully conducted search and rescue operations and contributed to the rescue of two survivors during the response.

Chile – CHI-01

Mr. Nicolas Oliver, Team Leader of CHI-01, presented the experience of the Chilean team during its deployment to Venezuela following the earthquake. Mr. Oliver explained that immediately after the earthquake, CHI-01 entered a state of readiness and conducted the necessary administrative, medical, and logistical preparations required for international deployment. The team was mobilized on 25 June and arrived in Venezuela during the early hours of 26 June. One of the initial challenges encountered was related to logistics and access. Due to airport availability and operational restrictions, the Chilean team arrived through an alternative airport located approximately 150 kilometers from the affected area. This required additional transportation arrangements and highlighted the importance of maintaining updated information on airport operations during international emergencies.

Mr. Oliver indicated that the large influx of international teams, combined with the arrival of both classified and non-classified response groups, created challenges for reception and coordination processes. Similar to the observations made by Ecuador, Chile noted that there was limited knowledge among some national stakeholders regarding INSARAG coordination mechanisms, including the RDC, Virtual OSOCC, UCC, and ICMS. Despite these challenges, Mr. Oliver highlighted several positive aspects of the response, including the support provided by Venezuelan authorities in facilitating immigration, customs, security, transportation, and logistical arrangements. He emphasized the strong cooperation observed between local authorities, military institutions, the UCC, and international teams operating within the INSARAG structure.

The presentation underscored the advantages of deploying INSARAG-classified teams, as their validated capacities, equipment inventories, and operational capabilities were already known by coordination structures. This allowed teams to be assigned appropriate tasks quickly and effectively. Mr. Oliver noted that classified teams integrated smoothly into the response framework and contributed to more efficient resource allocation and operational planning. He further stressed that teams operating outside INSARAG coordination mechanisms created challenges for situational awareness and resource management. Some non-classified groups arrived without prior registration through established coordination channels, making it difficult for authorities to track activities and effectively coordinate response efforts.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Oliver reaffirmed that INSARAG provides a common operational language that enables teams from different countries to work together efficiently under highly demanding conditions. He emphasized that the successful coordination observed among classified teams demonstrated the value of common standards, prior preparation, and adherence to established procedures.

Discussion

During the discussion, Mr. Lucien Jaggi (INSARAG Secretariat) asked for clarification regarding reports that some international teams had not passed through the RDC upon arrival.

In response, Mr. Nicolas Oliver explained that several international groups entered the country through different points of entry or arrived outside established reception arrangements. While all INSARAG-classified teams either passed through the RDC or later registered through the UCC, some non-classified teams and volunteer groups operated outside these mechanisms, reducing visibility and coordination.

Mr. Gabriel Rodríguez Racines complemented this explanation by noting that airport operating restrictions significantly influenced arrival patterns. Because some airports were only accepting flights during specific hours, several teams had to modify their travel arrangements. Ecuador deliberately adjusted its arrival schedule to land directly at Maiquetía, where the RDC had already been established, avoiding delays associated with alternative airports.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham, Head of Office, OCHA ROLAC, reflected on the observations presented and emphasized the importance of increasing awareness and familiarity with INSARAG methodologies throughout the region. She noted that some countries in the Americas and the Caribbean still have limited engagement with INSARAG structures and suggested strengthening outreach, mentorship, and bilateral cooperation to support the development of national focal points and improve preparedness to receive international assistance. Ms. Cheatham also highlighted the importance of strengthening engagement with additional stakeholders, including civil protection authorities, emergency management agencies, and other institutions that may assume leadership roles during disasters.

She further suggested that lessons identified during the Venezuela response should be carefully analyzed and used to strengthen future regional planning efforts, including activities under the Americas Regional Workplan.

Colonel Duarte, representing the Brazilian response team, provided an overview of Brazil's participation in the Venezuela operation. He reported that Brazil deployed 71 firefighters and six search dogs, and that the Brazilian teams had recovered approximately twenty victims at the time of the meeting. He highlighted the participation of personnel from Paraná, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo as part of Brazil's ongoing effort to strengthen cooperation and prepare for future INSARAG classification.

Colonel Duarte emphasized that the Venezuela response demonstrated the critical importance of preparedness not only for deploying international assistance but also for receiving it. He reinforced the need for countries to maintain national mechanisms capable of integrating incoming international resources effectively and highlighted the value of adherence to INSARAG methodologies, Virtual OSOCC procedures, RDC operations, and UCC coordination mechanisms. Additional remarks from the Brazilian delegation stressed the importance of information management, standardized procedures, and coordination between international teams and national authorities. Participants noted that the response further demonstrated the value of INSARAG methodologies in facilitating efficient and effective multinational operations.

The session concluded with participants recognizing professionalism, solidarity, and cooperation demonstrated throughout the response. Several speakers emphasized that the lessons learned from Venezuela should be documented and incorporated into future training activities, preparedness initiatives, and regional workplan priorities to further strengthen international USAR coordination in the Americas.

Session 10 – INSARAG Guidelines 2026, Key Amendments and Recommendations for Effective Implementation at National/Team Level

Mr. Patricio Fuentes, Team Leader of CHI-01 and member of the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group (GRG), presented the final version of the INSARAG Guidelines 2026, highlighting the principal amendments and recommendations for implementation at national and team levels.

Mr. Fuentes explained that the INSARAG Guidelines are reviewed every five years as part of a continuous improvement process. The 2026 revision incorporated lessons learned from recent international responses, particularly the Türkiye-Syria earthquake response, recommendations from Team Leaders Meetings, outcomes

of the INSARAG Governance Review, decisions of the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG), and contributions from several INSARAG Working Groups.

One of the most significant changes is the restructuring of the Guidelines into five volumes:

- Volume 1: Policy
- Volume 2: National Capacity Strengthening
- Volume 3: Operations
- Volume 4: Classification, Reclassification and National Accreditation Processes
- Volume 5: Field Operations and Coordination

Mr. Fuentes emphasized that the new structure is intended to make the Guidelines more user-friendly and easier to navigate for focal points, authorities, and USAR teams.

Key amendments presented included:

- Adoption of gender-neutral language throughout the Guidelines.
- Introduction of a formal induction process for newly appointed INSARAG Policy and Operational Focal Points.
- Expanded guidance on National Capacity Strengthening, including NAP, IRNAP, national coordination systems, reception of international assistance, and multi-hazard response capacities.
- Extension of the IRNAP recognition cycle from five to ten years for nationally recognized accreditation systems.
- Greater emphasis on preparedness to receive international assistance, including RDC, UCC, and coordination arrangements.
- Reinforcement of the responsibilities of INSARAG-classified teams to actively contribute to the network through participation in classifications, reclassifications, working groups, and other INSARAG activities.
- Inclusion of Flexible Response concepts, including flood response capacities and future flood rescue coordination guidance.
- Updates related to information management, reporting procedures, interoperability, and the implementation of ICMS 3.0.

Mr. Fuentes highlighted that one of the key messages of the revised Guidelines is the importance of ensuring that national authorities, Policy Focal Points, Operational Focal Points, and response organizations understand INSARAG coordination mechanisms and methodologies before emergencies occur, thereby facilitating the effective reception and coordination of international assistance.

He encouraged all countries, focal points, and team leaders to review the updated Guidelines and become familiar with the sections most relevant to their responsibilities. Participants were informed that the INSARAG Guidelines 2026 would be available through the INSARAG website and INSARAG platforms following their formal endorsement during the Global Meeting. The initial release will be available in English, with additional language translations to follow.

No further questions or comments were raised by participants. The session concluded with appreciation for the work of the INSARAG Guidelines Review Group and recognition of the collaborative effort undertaken by the INSARAG network during the revision process.

Session 11 – Member States Announcements and the Americas Troika 2027

Ms. Katherine Barreto, Emergency Response Associate at OCHA ROLAC supporting the INSARAG Americas region, invited participants to raise any additional announcements or matters for discussion before concluding the meeting. She then announced the composition of the upcoming Americas Troika, confirming that Guatemala had accepted to join the regional leadership.

Ms. Claudinne Ogaldes, INSARAG Policy Focal Point and Executive Secretary of CONRED, expressed appreciation for the confidence placed in her country. She noted that participation in the Troika represents a commitment by Guatemala to continue strengthening both national capacities and regional cooperation. While acknowledging that a governmental transition will occur in Guatemala, she emphasized that the commitment belongs to the country and not to a specific administration, and reaffirmed Guatemala's dedication to fulfilling its responsibilities within the region.

Participants welcomed Guatemala's inclusion in the Troika and recognized the importance of ensuring continuity in regional leadership. The Americas Troika 2027 was confirmed as follows:

- El Salvador – Outgoing Regional Chair
- Peru – Regional Chair (2027)
- Guatemala – Incoming Troika Member

The announcement concluded with a group photograph of representatives from El Salvador, Peru, and Guatemala, symbolizing the continuity of regional leadership and cooperation within INSARAG Americas.

Session 12 – Key Regional Meeting Outcomes and Closing Address

Ms. Katherine Barreto, Emergency Response Associate, OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), supporting the INSARAG Americas region, provided a summary of the key outcomes of the Regional Meeting. Ms. Barreto noted that 2026 had been a particularly active year for the region, marked by significant progress in capacity strengthening, accreditation initiatives, implementation of new INSARAG guidance, and operational deployments. She highlighted the region's continued commitment to training, preparedness, and cooperation, emphasizing that Flexible Response remains an important area of focus for the Americas due to the increasing impact of floods and other emerging hazards throughout the region. She also highlighted the importance of implementing the newly revised INSARAG Guidelines 2026, strengthening national capacities, and incorporating lessons learned from recent operations, particularly the response to the earthquake in Venezuela. Ms. Barreto thanked Canada for its support in promoting responder wellbeing and post-traumatic stress injury awareness through regional webinars and recognized the value of continuing these discussions following recent deployments. She also expressed appreciation to all countries that supported the response to Venezuela and encouraged Member States to continue documenting lessons learned and sharing recommendations that could further strengthen regional preparedness and cooperation.

Participants were invited to provide any final comments or observations before the conclusion of the meeting.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya, Director General of Civil Protection, Prevention and Disaster Mitigation, El Salvador INSARAG Americas Regional Chair 2026, thanked all participants for their active engagement throughout the Regional Meeting and emphasized that the role of the Regional Chair is primarily to facilitate dialogue and ensure that the perspectives and priorities of Member States are heard. He highlighted the value of the presentations on the Venezuela earthquake response, noting that they provided important lessons for countries currently pursuing accreditation, classification, or national capacity development processes. He also emphasized the

importance of the newly revised INSARAG Guidelines, particularly for countries advancing NAP and IRNAP processes, as they provide clear direction and guidance for strengthening national systems.

Mr. Amaya acknowledged the challenges that countries face when developing and sustaining USAR capacities, including technical, political, and financial constraints. He stressed that securing political support is often critical to obtaining the resources necessary to sustain these efforts. He thanked all participants for their commitment to INSARAG and reaffirmed El Salvador's continued support for the region. He also invited Member States to participate in the upcoming earthquake response exercise planned in El Salvador, which will focus on strengthening regional cooperation and the practical application of INSARAG methodology. Finally, he thanked Brazil for its hospitality and excellent organization of the Regional Meeting.

Ms. Shelley Cheatham Head of Office, OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), thanked Brazil for hosting the meeting and recognized both its regional and global leadership within the INSARAG network. She also thanked Mr. Amaya for his leadership as Regional Chair and acknowledged the commitment demonstrated by all participating countries. She emphasized that regional meetings are valuable not only for the technical discussions, review of guidelines, and exchange of operational experiences, but also for building relationships and trust among participants. She noted that these personal and professional connections become critical during emergency responses and strengthen cooperation across the region.

Reflecting on the Venezuela earthquake response, Ms. Cheatham highlighted the importance of continuing to analyze lessons learned, particularly regarding awareness and understanding of INSARAG coordination systems among governments, focal points, first responders, and local authorities. She emphasized the need to further strengthen familiarity with INSARAG methodologies and coordination mechanisms throughout the region.

Ms. Cheatham also reflected on the broader humanitarian context, noting that recent years have presented significant challenges to multilateral cooperation. In this context, she expressed optimism upon witnessing the solidarity shown during the Venezuela response, where numerous countries provided personnel, teams, expertise, and support. She stated that this collective response demonstrated the continued value of international cooperation and humanitarian solidarity. She reaffirmed the commitment of OCHA ROLAC and the INSARAG Secretariat to continue supporting the region through follow-up discussions, bilateral engagement, capacity-strengthening initiatives, and implementation of lessons learned.

The Regional Meeting concluded with appreciation to all participants for their commitment and contributions to strengthening INSARAG in the Americas. Participants were informed that follow-up activities would continue through regional consultations and upcoming meetings, including the next gathering to be hosted by El Salvador. The session was formally closed at the conclusion of the meeting.