



Overview

The INSARAG Asia-Pacific 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. The meeting brought together more than 60 participants from 13 countries, with 40 participants attending in person and around 20 joining virtually. The list of participants is enclosed in [Annex A](#).

The participants across the region reviewed progress, exchanged operational experience, and shaped priorities for the coming year. Against a backdrop of increasingly complex disasters and wider pressures on the humanitarian system, participants reaffirmed the region's strong tradition of mutual assistance and emphasized the importance of maintaining INSARAG's high standards while ensuring the network remains sustainable, affordable, and accessible. Discussions were framed around the three objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2026–2030: quality standards, flexible response, and strengthening localization. The meeting agenda is attached in [Annex B](#).

A central theme was maintaining INSARAG's high standards while adapting to an evolving operational environment. Working Group updates highlighted progress on the revised INSARAG Guidelines, IEC/IER quality assurance, national capacity building, training, flood response and ICMS 3.0. Discussions also explored the growing role of technology and the need to strengthen preparedness, interoperability, training, and knowledge sharing across the region.

Localization, partnerships and people-centred response were also prominent throughout the meeting. Participants emphasized that sustainable capacity building depends on national ownership, long-term partnerships, mutual learning and approaches tailored to local contexts. Discussions further addressed the protection of humanitarian personnel, gender and diversity, while new regional proposals on the IER cycle and greater uptake of IRNAP reflected efforts to make the network more sustainable and responsive to differing national capacities.

Looking ahead, consultations on the 2027 Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan identified priorities around quality standards and coordination training, flexible and multi-hazard response, stronger national and local capacities, and greater peer-to-peer cooperation. The outcomes will inform the 2027 Regional Workplan and Calendar, with an emphasis on clearer and more measurable priorities. Overall, the meeting reaffirmed that INSARAG's strength lies not only in technical standards and operational capability, but also in the relationships, trust, and shared commitment that enable members to work effectively together when disasters strike.

All meeting presentations are included in [Annex C-1](#) and [Annex C-2](#).

Session 1: Welcome and Official Opening

The meeting was opened by the Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Douglas May, Chief Superintendent, Specialist and Technical Response Branch, Queensland Fire and Rescue, Australia. Welcome addresses were delivered by Ms. Jennifer Noble, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Co-Chair 2026; Ms. Glaucia Hassler, Coordinator for Institutional Cooperation and Partnerships at the National Secretariat for Protection and Civil Defense (SEDEC), Ministry of Integration and Regional Development, Brazil; and Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, INSARAG Secretary.

Ms. Jennifer Noble, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Co-Chair 2026, welcomed participants and thanked Brazil for hosting the meeting. She welcomed Brunei Darussalam as the newest member of the INSARAG AP network, acknowledged the strong participation of Pacific members, and expressed condolences to those affected by the recent Venezuela earthquake. She recognized the efforts of responders involved in the operation and thanked Japan for its leadership as outgoing Regional Chair, as well as the INSARAG Secretariat for its continued leadership during a challenging period for the humanitarian system.

Reflecting on the evolving humanitarian landscape, Ms. Noble noted that disasters across the Asia-Pacific are becoming more frequent, severe and complex, requiring INSARAG to continue adapting beyond its traditional focus on earthquake response to support floods, cyclones and other complex emergencies. She highlighted the region's leadership in advancing flood response capabilities and stressed the growing importance of protecting humanitarian personnel, referencing Australia's role in the launch of the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel at the 2025 United Nations General Assembly. She also emphasized that innovation, technology, and strong partnerships with OCHA, IFRC, the ASEAN AHA Centre, Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA) and other partners remain essential to strengthening regional preparedness and operational effectiveness.

Ms. Noble reaffirmed Australia's commitment to ensuring the INSARAG network remains sustainable, affordable and fit for purpose while maintaining its high operational standards. She emphasized that standards should remain rigorous yet achievable for all members, welcomed discussions on Singapore's proposal to extend the IER cycle for established teams, and underscored the importance of localization, capacity building and long-term partnerships. Drawing on Australia's recent USAR capacity-building programme for Pacific countries, she highlighted the value of investing in local first responders, and encouraged participants to use the meeting to exchange experiences, strengthen collaboration and shape the future direction of the INSARAG network.

Ms. Glaucia Hassler, Coordinator for Institutional Cooperation and Partnerships at the National Secretariat for Protection and Civil Defense (SEDEC), Ministry of Integration and Regional Development of Brazil, welcomed participants to Foz do Iguaçu on behalf of the Government of Brazil. She also welcomed colleagues joining virtually, noting that INSARAG's strength lies in its global community united by a shared commitment to saving lives, regardless of geographical distance. She highlighted the productive Working Group and Team Leaders' meetings held prior to the regional meeting, which demonstrated the value of collaboration, knowledge exchange and partnerships across the network.

Ms. Hassler acknowledged colleagues who were unable to attend due to their deployment in response to the Venezuela earthquake, emphasizing that their absence served as a reminder that INSARAG is, above all, an operational network of professionals ready to respond when disasters strike. She expressed appreciation to participants for travelling long distances to attend the meeting and encouraged them to use the opportunity to strengthen cooperation and exchange experiences.

She concluded by expressing her hope that the meeting would further strengthen collaboration between the Asia-Pacific region and the wider INSARAG community. Reflecting on her own experiences within the network, she highlighted that beyond technical cooperation, INSARAG is built on trust, lasting professional relationships and friendships, and wished participants a productive meeting and an enjoyable stay in Brazil.

Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, INSARAG Secretary, thanked Australia for its leadership as Regional Chair and expressed appreciation to Brazil, the State of Paraná and the City of Foz do Iguaçu for hosting the meeting.

He welcomed the strong participation from across the Asia-Pacific region, noting that such regional gatherings strengthen professional relationships and enhance operational coordination during future disaster responses. He also recognized the Asia-Pacific region's growing contribution to international disaster response, highlighting its strong spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance.

Reflecting on the recent Venezuela earthquake, Mr. Rhodes Stampa expressed his condolences to those affected and acknowledged the rapid mobilization of the INSARAG network, including more than 20 classified USAR teams and numerous Emergency Medical Teams. He thanked all responders and emphasized that the operation demonstrated the value of the INSARAG network, while also serving as a reminder of the growing humanitarian needs worldwide. He noted the increasingly challenging operating environment, characterized by funding shortfalls and broader pressures on the humanitarian system, underscoring the importance of strengthening partnerships, preparedness, interoperability, and collective action.

Mr. Rhodes Stampa highlighted the ongoing Humanitarian Reset led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, reaffirming the principle of **"as local as possible, as international as necessary"** as closely aligned with INSARAG's work to strengthen national capacities while ensuring effective international support when required. He noted that the network now comprises 63 classified teams and encouraged participants to use the regional meeting to review progress, discuss implementation of the INSARAG Strategy 2026–2030, and shape regional priorities for 2027. He reaffirmed OCHA's continued support to the INSARAG network and welcomed **Ms. Wang Rui** as the new INSARAG Regional Focal Point for Asia-Pacific, succeeding **Ms. Haruka Ezaki**.

Following the opening proceedings, the agenda was formally adopted without amendment and convened for the official group photograph to conclude the opening session.

Session 2: Global and Regional 2026 Workplans and Updates

The session provided participants with an overview of key developments across the INSARAG network at the global and regional levels, including implementation of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2026–2030, progress against the 2026 Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan, regional capacity development, and upcoming activities. The session highlighted the importance of maintaining network quality and operational readiness while strengthening localization, flexible response, and collective ownership of the network.

Ms. Wang Rui, the new INSARAG Regional Focal Point for Asia-Pacific, introduced herself to the network and thanked her predecessor, Ms. Haruka Ezaki, for her longstanding support to the region. She emphasized the value of the INSARAG network in building relationships, trust, and interoperability before disasters occur and expressed her commitment to working closely with the INSARAG Secretariat, regional chairs, national focal points, and other members of the network.

Presenting global updates, Ms. Wang highlighted the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2026–2030, endorsed by the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) in early 2026. She outlined its three strategic objectives; quality standards, flexible response, and strengthening localization, which aim respectively to maintain the credibility and quality of INSARAG standards and classification processes; adapt operational models to floods and other hazards beyond traditional USAR response; and strengthen national systems, accreditation programmes, and the adaptation of INSARAG tools to regional contexts. She clarified that while partnership is no longer a standalone strategic objective under the new Strategy, it remains a cross-cutting principle underpinning all three objectives and the work of the network as a whole.

Ms. Wang further noted that the continued growth of INSARAG, including increasing interest in IEC/IER processes, brings both opportunities and additional demands on the network. Against the backdrop of the Humanitarian Reset and funding constraints, she emphasized that INSARAG remains a member-driven network, and that continued contributions from national focal points, classified teams, classifiers, and Working Groups are essential to sustaining its quality and activities. She highlighted the INSARAG Recognised National Accreditation Process (IRNAP) as an important pathway for countries to strengthen national USAR capacity before pursuing international classification. She concluded by noting that the Asia-Pacific region currently has 13 INSARAG-classified teams; nine Heavy and four Medium, and remains one of the network's most active

regions, characterized by strong operational capacities, growing national capabilities and a longstanding tradition of mutual support.

Ms. Jennifer Noble, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Co-Chair 2026, presented progress against the 2026 Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan and thanked regional partners for their continued commitment to its implementation. She noted strong engagement during the first half of the year through the ISG meeting, two Asia-Pacific informal meetings and ongoing regional activities. She highlighted tangible progress in strengthening first responder capacities through INSARAG-aligned training, exercises, and standard operating procedures, as well as expanding partnerships and joint activities to improve interoperability and readiness. She also emphasized the Asia-Pacific region's active contribution to the global INSARAG network through Working Groups, classifications and reclassifications, mentoring and classifier development, and the promotion of INSARAG methodologies. She congratulated Hong Kong, China (CHN-03) on successfully completing its Medium IEC in March 2026.

Ms. Noble highlighted continued regional cooperation and capacity development, particularly across the Pacific, as well as progress in strengthening flood and landslide response capabilities through the extended Flood Response Working Group. She noted that this work demonstrates the region's leadership in developing capabilities that remain aligned with INSARAG methodologies while supporting localization and longer-term capacity development. She also highlighted efforts to broaden access to training through innovative and cost-effective approaches, including Australia's online ICMS 3.0 workshop for more than 100 team leaders, alongside practical regional initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific USAR Coordination Course hosted by the Republic of Korea and Indonesia's International Search and Rescue Challenge. These activities were recognized as important opportunities to strengthen professional networks, leadership, interoperability, and the consistent application of INSARAG standards.

Looking ahead, Ms. Noble highlighted a busy programme for the remainder of 2026, including planned activities in Pakistan, upcoming IEC and IER activities in the region, and the INSARAG Global Simulation Exercise in Qatar, which will provide an opportunity to test interoperability and coordination under the enhanced earthquake response framework. She noted that the breadth of completed and upcoming activities demonstrates the region's strong leadership, collaboration, and commitment to INSARAG. She invited participants to reflect on progress against the Regional Workplan, identify challenges and opportunities, and consider where collective efforts should be focused or streamlined to ensure delivery of the remaining priorities for 2026.

Session 3: Working Group Updates

In this session, representatives from the INSARAG working groups presented updates on their respective areas of work, covering the development of the 2026 INSARAG Guidelines, flood response, training, IEC/IER quality assurance, national capacity building, and information management. The presentations highlighted recent progress, key outputs, and priorities for future work.

Mr. Lok Wee Keong, USAR Team Leader, Singapore Civil Defence Force, and **Mr. Safrizan Bin Suhaini**, Head of Logistics Section, Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team, National Disaster Management Agency, Members of the Guidelines Review Group (GRG), updated participants on the restructuring of the 2026 INSARAG Guidelines, which were extended beyond 2025 to incorporate post-Türkiye/Syria earthquake lessons and over 200 comments ahead of ISG endorsement in 2026. Emphasizing network-wide ownership, they outlined updates across five reorganized volumes: (1) Policy, introduces gender-neutral language, clearer distinctions between binding requirements and guidance, quarterly focal-point inductions, and the Warsaw Declaration; (2) National Capacity Building, provides strengthened, stepwise guidance for national USAR frameworks and receiving international assistance; (3) Operations, updates coordination protocols, terminology, and information management based on recent response lessons; (4) IEC/IER, offers flexible assessment durations, streamlined procedures, and enhanced medical integration; and (5) Field Operations Guide, simplifies ICMS tools, reduces unnecessary data collection, improves worksite tracking flexibility, and aligns terminology across all INSARAG platforms.

Mr. Jeremy Stubbs, Chief Superintendent, Fire and Rescue New South Wales, Member of the Flood Response Working Group, called for the nomination of two to three additional Asia-Pacific members possessing technical flood-rescue expertise to strengthen the working group's capabilities after establishing four years ago and comprising 17 members across all three regions. He highlighted three major achievements: formally establishing the working group and its broader expert community, creating a flood response directory for countries to nominate bilateral support capabilities, and developing a capacity-building guideline to bolster national flood capabilities, reduce fatalities, and accelerate recovery. He noted that the group's mandate has been extended to 2030 under new terms of reference, focusing on reviewing existing documents, providing targeted support to nations lacking flood response capability, and executing an annually updated communications plan.

Mr. Andrew Shurety, Superintendent Manager Bushfire and Aviation, Fire and Rescue New South Wales, Member of the Training Working Group, updated the recent USAR Coordination Course in Busan, Korea and a UC train-the-trainer course underway in China. The working group is developing and refining the INSARAG course catalogue (including online modules), the Classifiers' Course, and the website's training directory to improve accessibility and alignment of training pathways. Additionally, he noted that the revised UC Handbook was presented at the Team Leaders' Meeting, receiving generally positive feedback while its proposed triage categories undergo further refinement. Future priorities include continuing coordination training, strengthening UC course modules, and delivering targeted capacity building in the Pacific supported by an improved training directory.

Mr. David Sochor from Switzerland, Co-Chair of the IEC/IER Quality Assurance Working Group, provided an update on refining the IEC/IER process, targeting final consultations at the February 2027 Busan Team Leaders' Meeting and ISG endorsement in March 2027. Key technical and procedural updates to the checklist include chronological reordering, requiring classified teams to provide classifiers, mandating two distinct technical search methods, and adding impalement scenarios to medical requirements. Operational parameters were also adjusted: crane requirements were reduced to 1 ton and a single engagement, rope work height to 6–7 metres, and the 36-hour limit for medium teams made extendable to 38–40 hours if declared during the go/no-go call. He concluded by introducing a classifier quality assurance framework, featuring a three-hour regional training package, and requesting classifier nominations, particularly from the Asia-Pacific and Americas regions.

Mr. Muhamad Zulkhairi Idris, Management, Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team, National Disaster Management Agency, Member of the National Capacity Building Working Group (NCBWG), provided an update on advancing localization under INSARAG Strategic Objective 2 by adapting INSARAG methodology to national systems, and integrating national-international coordination. Key achievements include delivering the ENAP/ENUP leadership course across the Americas and Asia-Pacific (including Korea and Canada), producing guidance notes on host nation support and community response, and contributing to the restructuring of former Manual A into Volume 2 (National Capacity Building), which now offers streamlined guidance on USAR capacity development, national frameworks, receiving international aid, and national quality assurance. Drawing on lessons from China's IRNAP process, he stressed that localization empowers countries to lead their own resilient systems through strong national ownership, multi-agency engagement, and open review, rather than replacing international assistance.

Mr. Jeff Maunder, Deputy Team Leader, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, Co-Chair of the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) from New Zealand, provided an update on the strategic transition to ICMS 3, emphasizing that information management is an operational enabler for coordination among national authorities, RDC, UCC, and field teams. Drawing on lessons from responses in Türkiye/Syria and Venezuela, ICMS 3 addresses critical operational needs through simpler data capture, low-bandwidth/offline and GPS functionality, automated outputs, flexible tasking, and a role-based INSARAG Hub. Following field testing in Europe and Australia, online training rollout, and an endorsed sustainable funding model, ICMS 3 is scheduled for formal launch around July 2026, with availability in late August/early September. Following a parallel-run

transition period with ICMS 2, ICMS 3 will become mandatory in February 2027, with Jeff calling on team leaders and regions to champion adoption, undertake training, and support implementation.

[Note: Medical Working Group was not presented, however relevant update slides could be found in the [Annex C.1](#)]

Session 4: Role of Technology in USAR Response

The session explored the role of technology in Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) response. Led by **Mr. Kitano Yasuo**, Emergency Relief Coordinator and Disaster Relief Team Leader of Japan, and **Ms. Sakamaki Eriko**, Advisor, Secretariat of the Japan Disaster Relief Team, Japan International Cooperation Agency, the discussion was structured around three key questions: (1) what technology has had the biggest impact on participants' operations; (2) what lessons have been learned from using technology in real deployments; and (3) what INSARAG should prioritize over the next five years to further strengthen the use of technology across the network. Key discussions focused on the following thematic areas:

Connectivity: Speakers emphasized connectivity as a critical enabler for effective USAR operations, supporting early decision-making and real-time situational awareness between field teams, command structures, and the UCC. They stressed that IEC/IER connectivity evaluations must assess both equipment, such as Starlink, and deployment modes, distinguishing between mobile solutions for ASR2 teams and static systems for command posts. Reliable connectivity allows teams to track coverage, share updates with host authorities, and initiate ICMS data flows before UCC setup. However, significant operational risks, including high costs, host-country regulatory restrictions, infrastructure limitations, and data sync delays between offline and online modes, must be proactively addressed from the initial request for international assistance.

Situational Awareness and Assessment: Participants highlighted the growing value of drones, thermal imaging, satellite imagery, and other remote sensing technologies in strengthening rapid damage assessment and situational awareness during USAR operations. The Hong Kong Fire Services Department shared its use of drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras to scan collapsed structures, improve visibility inside damaged buildings and generate 3D models of affected sites, enabling more comprehensive operational assessments. Hong Kong also presented its digital equipment management system, which combines RFID, GPS tracking and equipment scanners to monitor the location and movement of personnel and equipment throughout deployments. Participants noted that the operational use of drones remains subject to host country regulations, as demonstrated by restrictions encountered during deployments in Myanmar, and stressed the need for clear operating procedures to ensure their safe and coordinated use during international deployments.

Artificial intelligence (AI): Participants held an extensive discussion on the growing application of AI across USAR preparedness and response.

- **China:** The Chinese delegation presented the development and application of AI in USAR operations. To address language barriers and the complexity of INSARAG terminology, China is developing an AI-powered app that recognizes and translates INSARAG guidelines and terminology. By analysing worksite photos, it identifies hazards and provides safety guidance for less experienced structural engineers. The app also offers diplomatic guidance, integrates first-responder videos and training materials, and promotes public disaster preparedness through smartphone learning. The Hong Kong representative shared additional applications, including RFID and GPS tracking for equipment management, AI-powered Q&A based on INSARAG guidelines, and AI analysis of Virtual OSOCC feeds to extract key operational information. China announced that these tools will be provided free of charge to the international community and demonstrated at the upcoming ERE in Qatar. The delegation emphasized that AI should remain a support tool and never replace human decision-making in rescue operations.

- Republic of Korea (ROK): The representative from the ROK shared that they are building an AI-powered database trained on historical incident data to optimize resource deployment decisions. Currently in the experimental phase, the system analyses multiple variables, including the specific city, month, date, time, and even ambient temperature, to help determine the precise number of firefighters and fire engines required for an emergency response.

Emerging Technologies: Participants discussed the potential applications and ethical challenges of emerging technologies, including micro-drones, bio-robotics, and humanoid robotics in USAR. Representatives from Singapore and Australia shared trials involving Madagascar "cyborg cockroaches" equipped with cameras for searching confined void spaces, highlighting advances in waterproofing and directional control, while prompting discussion on ethical considerations. Participants also explored the use of micro-drones, canine-supporting robotics and humanoid robots to enhance search capabilities in complex environments. While these technologies show significant potential to improve situational awareness and operational efficiency, most remain at the research or testing stage. Participants agreed that emerging technologies, particularly AI, should enhance rather than replace human judgement, recognising that professional expertise and operational experience remain fundamental to effective disaster response. Participants agreed that wider operational deployment will require greater technological maturity, supportive regulatory frameworks, and clear guidance within the INSARAG standards.

Session 5: End of Day 1 Announcements

To conclude the day's proceedings, representatives from the Republic of Korea distributed administrative and logistical details regarding the upcoming INSARAG Team Leaders' Meeting, scheduled to take place in Busan in February 2027. Logistical arrangements were also announced for the evening reception hosted by Japan. The Co-Chairs subsequently adjourned the meeting, which will be reconvened at 09:00 on 8 July.

Session 6: Recap of Day 1 and Agenda of Day 2

Ms. Jennifer Noble, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Co-Chair 2026, opened Day 2 with reflections on the previous day's proceedings, highlighting key themes shared across sessions. She underscored INSARAG as a community built on flexibility, capability, innovation, cooperation, and knowledge sharing, noting that resilient national systems form the foundation of effective disaster response and that localization empowers countries rather than reduces international support. She pointed to the revised Guidelines and flood response initiatives as clear evidence of the network's ongoing evolution, while framing the transition to ICMS 3 as a lesson-driven enhancement in information sharing and decision-making. Furthermore, she emphasized that technology serves as an enabler of, rather than a substitute for human judgment and operational expertise. In closing, Ms. Noble renewed the call for individuals across the region to contribute their time and technical expertise to the working groups.

Session 7: Capacity Building

Mr. Jeremy Stubbs, Chief Superintendent, Fire and Rescue New South Wales, moderated a panel with **Mr. Puamau T. Sowane**, Chief Executive Officer, National Fire Authority, Fiji; **Mr. James Ketaru**, Director, Fire Rescue Service Team, Solomon Islands; and **Mr. Muhamad Zulkhairi Idris**, Special Disaster Assistant & Rescue Team (SMART), Malaysia. The discussion highlighted the following key points:

- **Fiji:** A strategic partnership with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services since 2022 has delivered USAR Category 1 and swift-water rescue training and certification. A new community fire warden framework now reaches approximately 1,987 communities across Fiji, serving nearly 900,000 residents through a workforce of just over 700 firefighters across 21 stations. This capacity-building effort has transformed the National

Fire Authority from a reactive agency into an integrated emergency response leader. Train-the-trainer models and shared standards continue to drive sustainability, with priority needs now focused on large-scale disaster mobilization and strengthening a unified incident command system across national agencies.

- **Malaysia:** Ongoing collaboration with Australia, acting as the mentor for Malaysia's upcoming IER, has enhanced exposure to flood risk assessment methodologies, equipment standards, and tactical swift-water rescue training at the Penrith Whitewater Stadium. This partnership has significantly improved interoperability and helped identify key capability gaps ahead of Malaysia's annual monsoon season.
- **Solomon Islands:** The bilateral partnership with Fire and Rescue New South Wales, initiated under a first memorandum of understanding in 1999, provides an in-country fire advisor, locally tailored training, and instructor development. Serving approximately 800,000 residents with 54 firefighters and a single fire station, the country prioritizes community-level capability and localized training props. Reaching outer island communities remains the primary operational challenge.
- **Cross-cutting themes:** Capacity building is a two-way partnership built on mutual learning, trust, and shared experience, rather than a one-way transfer of knowledge. Key principles for program sustainability after partner departures include co-design, validation models, and national ownership. Furthermore, surge capacity must be regional and supported by mechanisms such as the Pacific Regional Emergency Strategic Coordination Mechanism (PRESCOM). Enhancing regional interoperability will require multinational exercises, regional flood rescue frameworks, and cross-border information sharing.
- Participants welcomed the strong contribution of Pacific representatives and recognized the growing role of Pacific countries in advancing regional cooperation, capacity building and localization. Discussions highlighted how Pacific experiences and perspectives are helping to inform more locally led and sustainable approaches to strengthening disaster preparedness and response capability across the region.

Session 8: Protection of Humanitarian Personnel

Mr. Adrian Fleming, Assistant Director, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, presented the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel. Over the past three years, more than 1,000 humanitarian personnel have lost their lives worldwide, with the overwhelming majority being national and locally recruited staff. Launched during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in September 2025 and currently endorsed by 114 signatories, the Declaration creates no new legal obligations. Instead, it reinforces existing international humanitarian law and seeks to generate the political will required to bridge the gap between law and practice. The Declaration is structured around four pillars:

- **Adherence:** Emphasizes respect for international humanitarian law, strengthened domestic legal frameworks, and aligned doctrine and training.
- **Access:** Facilitates safe, rapid, and unobstructed reach to populations in need by removing visa, customs, and sanctions barriers, countering misinformation and disinformation, avoiding the criminalization of humanitarian action, and strengthening civil-military coordination.
- **Alignment:** Ensures that protections apply equally to international, national, and local personnel. Recognizing that operational constraints fall disproportionately on local responders, the Declaration frames the connection between arriving international teams and local actors as a fundamental protection issue rather than a mere logistical concern.
- **Accountability:** Focuses on prompt, independent, and effective investigations into incidents, comprehensive support for survivors, and improved incident data collection.

During the discussion, New Zealand outlined its integrated approach to health, safety, and security planning across all deployment phases. Japan highlighted its involvement in the ministerial group alongside its ongoing emergency preparedness collaboration with UNHCR. Participants discussed hostile environment awareness training (HEAT) and proposed establishing regional practices for sharing training resources. China shared insights from its safety and security training with UNHCR and addressed the operational realities of USAR deployments in insecure environments, such as navigating checkpoints, encountering armed actors unaware of

ceasefires, and managing local perceptions of response teams and equipment. China emphasized that because earthquake response is strictly time-critical, USAR teams lack the extended window for access negotiations typically available to other humanitarian actors, making go/no-go decisions particularly acute. Australia confirmed it will convey the region's perspectives to the Group of Friends for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel in Geneva.

Session 9: Asia-Pacific Members New Proposals

Proposal 1 — Extending the IER Cycle for Established USAR Teams (Singapore)

Mr. Ling Young Ern, Deputy Commissioner (Operations & Resilience), Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), presented a proposal to allow established USAR teams with a demonstrated track record to move from the current five-year to an eight-year reclassification cycle, on an optional basis.

- **Rationale:** Network growth has substantially increased the cumulative burden on classifiers, mentors, the Secretariat, and participating teams. For teams operating in resource-constrained environments, the current five-year cycle can present a genuine barrier to sustained engagement. Furthermore, experience gained from extended timelines during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated no significant deterioration in operational standards.
- **Eligibility (proposed):** The Secretariat would evaluate eligibility holistically, rather than through self-certification, using a structured matrix. This matrix assesses operational deployment records, training participation, contributions to INSARAG workstreams, and provision of classifiers or mentors. Only teams that have completed at least a second IER cycle qualify, while newer teams remain on the standard five-year cycle.
- **Quality safeguards (proposed):** The proposal establishes key checkpoints, including a third-year self-declaration and a fifth-year pre-CPOE submission. Teams failing to demonstrate readiness will revert to the five-year cycle. Teams must also maintain ongoing readiness, active participation, and periodic compliance declarations.
- **Modelled impact:** Based on 41 teams completing two IER cycles over 16 years, each skipped reclassification saves roughly USD 200,000 per team, totalling USD 8.2 million. Reduced network exercise costs save an additional USD 50,000 per exercise, totalling USD 2 million. Combined annual savings reach approximately USD 640,000 and 43,800 man-hours, given that a single IER demands about 16,800 man-hours from the participating team.
- **Discussion:** Australia cautioned that deployment history depends on government decisions, team rotations, and circumstance, requiring careful application as an eligibility criterion. Japan expressed support, confirming the extension would remain optional rather than mandatory. China advised carefully calibrating cycle lengths due to high personnel turnover, which can reach 50 to 60 percent over eight years, while suggesting established teams contribute more classifiers. Participants added that teams on extended cycles must stay updated on Guidelines revisions through the year-three and year-five checkpoints.
- **Next steps:** The proposal will be circulated to the Quality Assurance IEC and IER Working Group for feedback between July and August 2026. A focused technical working group of volunteers will form to refine the eligibility matrix and stress-test safeguards. Final recommendations will be tabled at the ISG meeting in March 2027.

Proposal 2 — Promoting IRNAP Adoption within the Asia-Pacific Region (Singapore and China)

Mr. Ling Young Ern and **Mr. Li Li**, Director, International Rescue and Cooperation Department, National Earthquake Response Support Service, Ministry of Emergency Management (MEM) of China, presented a joint initiative to expand IRNAP accreditation in the region. Currently, only two of the ten INSARAG-classified countries in the Asia-Pacific hold IRNAP accreditation: Singapore (2022) and China (2026). In contrast, the AEME and Americas regions each have four accredited countries, highlighting significant untapped potential.

- Support framework: A voluntary three-tier framework structures this initiative. First, Aware delivers joint outreach and experience-sharing with the Secretariat to build understanding. Second, Equip offers invitations to training programs co-hosted by China MEM and SCDF, providing access to MEM training bases as well as SCDF's Home Team Tactical Training Centre and Civil Defence Academy. Third, Act supplies technical support, scoping, exercise guidance, and onboarding alongside the TSG and TRG framework for ready countries. Both Singapore and China will nominate qualified experts to the regional TSG and TRG pool, with contributions welcomed from other countries.
- SCDF's experience and China's perspective: SCDF completed four years of national alignment from 2018, followed by a six-month formal process from TSG initiation in May 2022 to the TRG visit and field exercise in October 2022, which featured a magnitude 7.4 earthquake scenario across nine worksites. China emphasized that IRNAP is a voluntary, demand-driven investment in national capacity before disasters strike, complementing rather than replacing existing INSARAG mechanisms.
- Discussion: Participants encouraged aligning the initiative with the existing IRNAP Advisory Group and leveraging established regional relationships and mentoring arrangements. Cost was raised as a significant consideration, with participants emphasizing that support should be calibrated to each country's specific scale and context.
- Next steps: Regional outreach will begin in July 2026, with training programs developed in collaboration with the National Capacity Building Working Group. A progress update will be presented at the informal meeting during HNPW 2027.

Additional session: Update from the Team Leaders Meeting

Mr. Camille Michel, Team Leaders' Representative, presented a summary of the discussions and key outcomes of the Team Leaders Meeting held over the previous two days. He reported that the meeting opened with updates from the INSARAG Secretariat, including reflections on the recent Venezuela earthquake response. Participants observed a moment of silence in honour of those affected and agreed that lessons identified from the operation should be assessed through a formal After Action Review before conclusions are drawn. He also announced the Republic of Korea's offer to host the next Team Leaders Meeting in February 2027.

The Team Leaders meeting reviewed a range of strategic and operational developments, including updates on the INSARAG Classification and Reclassification (IEC/R) process, the INSARAG Strategy 2026–2031, modernization of the Virtual OSOCC platform, and the revised INSARAG Guidelines. Team Leaders welcomed ongoing efforts to improve the INSARAG and emphasized the importance of maintaining accurate and up-to-date information, including team fact sheets and operational data.

Discussions in the meeting also focused on the implementation of ICMS 3.0, which received strong support from participants as a means of enhancing and simplifying information management. Updates to the IEC/R checklist were reviewed through group consultations, with the work of the Quality Assurance Working Group acknowledged and the proposed revisions broadly endorsed, subject to minor refinements identified during the meeting.

Significant attention at the meeting was given to the functioning of INSARAG working groups. Team Leaders noted the need to strengthen engagement across the network and recommended the development of clearer terms of reference covering membership, duration of service, and renewal mechanisms. Support was also expressed for further exploration of an Operations Working Group, with a more detailed proposal to be presented at a future Team Leaders' Meeting. Team Leaders additionally highlighted the need to clarify the role of the Team Leaders' Representative within the INSARAG governance structure through the development of more formal terms of reference.

Capacity building and quality assurance were also prominent themes. The meeting emphasized the importance of recruiting, training, and mentoring future classifiers, team leaders, and mentors, including through a newly developed leadership course, expanded online training opportunities and closer collaboration between the Quality Assurance and Training Working Groups. Team Leaders further supported the development of mechanisms to assess classifier performance and provide structured feedback following classifications and reclassifications.

Finally, Team Leaders discussed communication within the INSARAG network and encouraged the adoption of more effective information-sharing mechanisms among team leaders. The meeting concluded with a strong emphasis on continuous improvement, succession planning, knowledge-sharing, and maintaining an active and engaged global INSARAG community.

Session 10: Gender in Disasters

Mr. Jeremy Stubbs, Chief Superintendent, Fire and Rescue New South Wales presented updates on gender and diversity in disasters, drawing on UNDRR research. He noted that flooding accounted for approximately 43 – 45 per cent of disaster-related deaths in 2022 and that flood disasters have increased around five-fold since 1980, while stronger national flood response capacity significantly reduces fatalities and accelerates community recovery. He also highlighted that disasters disproportionately affect women, persons with disabilities, and people with learning difficulties, with domestic violence increasing in the aftermath of disasters. Prevention, preparedness, response and recovery measures can help mitigate these impacts. Australia shared its collaboration with Gender and Disaster Australia (GADAus), supported by DFAT, which provides publicly available training materials and responder checklists. Malaysia's NDMO presented its internally developed scenario-based cultural awareness training for USAR teams, supported by UNDAC members, covering cultural and gender sensitivity, codes of conduct and ethics during response. Participants emphasized that diversity extends beyond team composition and should be integrated throughout the disaster management cycle, while encouraging greater regional sharing of training resources.

Session 11: Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan 2027 Consultations

Ms. WANG Rui, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Focal Point, introduced the consultations on the 2027 Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan and Calendar. Participants were divided into three breakout groups aligned with the objectives of the INSARAG Strategic Plan 2026-2030:

- **Quality Standards** was facilitated by Mr. LI Li, Director, International Rescue and Cooperation Department, National Earthquake Response Support Service, Ministry of Emergency Management (MEM) of China, and note-taking by Mr. Safrizan Bin Suhaini, Head of Logistics Section, Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team, National Disaster Management Agency. The discussion focused on strengthening alignment with INSARAG standards and global quality assurance initiatives. Expected outcomes included consolidating regional and national training calendars and identifying opportunities to involve international trainers, participants, and observers to enhance interoperability and compliance with INSARAG standards.
- **Flexible Response** was facilitated by Mr. Jeremy Stubbs, Chief Superintendent, Fire and Rescue New South Wales, and note-taking by Mr. Lok Wee Keong, USAR Team Leader, Singapore Civil Defence Force. The discussion focused on strengthening the agility and flexibility of USAR teams to respond to diverse, multi-hazard emergencies beyond traditional earthquake operations. The expected outcome is enhanced operational readiness through strengthened flood response capabilities, adaptable operational models, and increased knowledge sharing and capacity building.
- **Strengthening Localization** was facilitated by Mr. Munseok Lee, Fire Captain, Korean National Fire Agency, and note-taking by Ms. SAKAMAKI Eriko, Advisor, Secretariat of Japan Disaster Relief Team,

Japan International Cooperation Agency. The discussion focused on strengthening the INSARAG network by empowering regional, national, and local actors through inclusive engagement, knowledge sharing, and locally led approaches. The expected outcome is enhanced emergency preparedness and coordination through stronger regional collaboration, wider adoption of IRNAP, and improved community-level response capacity.

- Online participants were also invited to contribute to the discussions. As many members were unable to participate due to time zone differences, a broader written consultation will follow. The outcomes of the breakout discussions will be consolidated and circulated by the Chair to inform the development of both the 2027 Regional Workplan and the 2027 Regional Calendar.

Ad hoc session: Review of the Draft Brazil Declaration

Ms. Jennifer Noble, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Co-Chair 2026, presented the final draft Foz do Iguaçu Declaration, an outcome document negotiated across the three regions, noting its non-binding nature centred on encouragement rather than mandate. The region raised the following key points for the Chair to present to the Secretariat:

- Paragraph 4: the sub-paragraphs should be aligned with the three strategic objectives of the new INSARAG Strategy.
- Paragraph 10: Discussions centred on whether INSARAG should set minimum standards where established national frameworks exist. Participants had suggested revising the text from "begin developing" to "continue considering" or removing the word "minimum." The region requested clarification regarding the intended scope, while noting the inclusion of a safeguard specifying that progress remains subject to available resources and member support, with preliminary findings expected at the 2027 ISG meeting. Additionally, delegates noted that the current draft references "hydrometeorological disasters" instead of flood response.
- Paragraph 11: Singapore requested that "applicable national legislation" be referenced alongside humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. Australia noted the drafters' intent to avoid tying the text to any affected state's legislative framework and undertook to register the comment.
- Paragraph 2: Participants requested clarification on the reference to UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182, suggesting the text mirror the official phrasing regarding facilitating access for international humanitarian assistance when requested, rather than specifying USAR teams. Discussions confirmed that the paragraph simply reaffirms existing commitments rooted in the core principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality without introducing new obligations.
- Paragraphs 11 and 12: Members noted minor typographical corrections and were invited to raise any critical red line issues with the Chair that afternoon, as the text had reached the final stage of the drafting process.

Session 13: Plenary: Finalization of the Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan 2027 and Development of Asia-Pacific Regional Calendar 2027 and Onwards

The plenary session consolidated inputs from breakout groups to finalize the Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan 2027 and draft the regional calendar:

- **Quality Standards (SO1):** The discussion focused on sustaining and advancing INSARAG quality standards to ensure effective, professional, and coordinated USAR operations across the Asia-Pacific region. Participants emphasized the importance of regular capacity building through USAR coordination training, ICMS and field-based exercises, while incorporating lessons learned from recent responses, including the forthcoming Venezuela earthquake after-action review.

Delegates highlighted the need for clearer guidance on the management of unclassified USAR teams during international operations and encouraged OCHA to continue promoting INSARAG methodologies to address coordination gaps identified in recent responses, including Türkiye and Myanmar. Participants also supported flexible, function-based deployment models, such as management-only teams, to enable more efficient and needs-based assistance.

The region further discussed strengthening the IEC/IER process by encouraging host countries to accommodate observers with sufficient lead time, simplifying procedures without compromising standards, and ensuring the availability of qualified classifiers and trainers. Participants emphasized the need to balance online and in-person training, expand regional USAR coordination trainer capacity, and promote the localization of INSARAG coordination methodologies within national disaster management systems.

Country updates included India's announcement of upcoming initiatives, including the provisional scheduling of the India-1 IEC in February 2027, a USAR Coordination Course in November 2026, an ICMS3 course in November 2027, and its interest in hosting the Asia-Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise in October 2027, with requests for regional trainer and operational support.

- **Flexible Response (SO2):** Participants highlighted that member states are already expanding operations beyond traditional earthquake response by breaking heavy teams into smaller modules for calibrated deployments and applying USAR capabilities to industrial accidents, typhoons, flooding, and landslides. In this context, Hong Kong, China outlined its annual joint exercises with Macao and Guangdong, shared typhoon early-warning arrangements across the three observatories, and integrated hazardous materials response with USAR operations. Discussions underscored uncrewed aerial systems as a key force multiplier for operational awareness and responder safety, while emphasizing the potential to calibrate ICMS to support flexible response and the need to pursue robust connectivity solutions such as mobile coverage units.

To strengthen the regional network, participants advocated for enhanced knowledge sharing, joint exercises, and reciprocal access to training facilities across member countries. Finally, the session noted that the core INSARAG earthquake methodology remains highly scalable across most hazard types by treating affected locations as standardized worksites.

- **Strengthening Localization (SO3):** five priorities were reported: embrace tailored localization rather than applying rigid international frameworks; bridge international standards with domestic systems; foster peer-to-peer regional collaboration and mentorship; commit to knowledge sustainability by moving from fragmented short-term training toward permanent national knowledge bases; and drive toward self-reliance and mutual contribution, transitioning countries from recipients of assistance to proactive contributors.

In country updates, China highlighted its urban and community first-responder training alongside team exchange plans; New Zealand noted its ongoing bilateral Pacific capacity building with an emphasis on flood and landslide response; and Brunei Darussalam reported on its ASEAN ERAT engagement, bilateral cooperation with Malaysia, and an upcoming national tabletop exercise scheduled for September.

Session 14: Key Regional Meeting Outcomes, Member States Announcements and Closing Address

Member states presented key national announcements and progress updates during the session:

- **Mongolia** (pre-recorded): outlined its progress toward classification readiness.
- **Myanmar** (pre-recorded): the Director General of the Myanmar Fire Services Department expressed Myanmar's ambition to achieve INSARAG External Classification. Singapore subsequently announced that, following an April 2026 meeting between the Director General and the SCDF Commissioner, SCDF agreed to mentor Myanmar through the process.
- **Republic of Korea**: announced the contribution of two personnel to support INSARAG working groups, as well as announce of hosting Team Leaders Meeting in February 2027.
- **Japan**: speaking as the outgoing 2025 Chair, expressed gratitude to the network and reaffirmed its ongoing commitment as a member of the Troika.
- **India**: provided updates on the provisional scheduling of the India-1 IEC in February 2027. India also announced plans to conduct a USAR Coordination Course in November 2026 and an ICMS3 course in November 2027 and expressed interest in hosting the Asia-Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise in October 2027, with requests for regional trainer support and operational collaboration.

The meeting concluded with closing remarks by **Ms. Jennifer Noble**, INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Co-Chair 2026, and **Ms. Wang Rui**, INSARAG Regional Focal Point for Asia-Pacific.

Ms. Noble thanked participants, including those joining virtually, for their active engagement throughout the meeting and expressed appreciation to the INSARAG Secretariat, Brazil as host, Japan as outgoing Regional Chair, and all colleagues who contributed to the organization and delivery of the meeting. Reflecting on the discussions, she highlighted practical examples from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Malaysia demonstrating how sustained partnerships and capacity building can strengthen regional capability through mutual learning, trust, and shared experience. She also emphasized the importance of translating the Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel into practice and, drawing on discussions on gender and diversity, reiterated the need to keep affected people and communities at the centre of preparedness, response and recovery.

Ms. Noble welcomed proposals put forward by Singapore, and jointly by Singapore and China, aimed at improving the efficiency and sustainability of the INSARAG network, and encouraged regional members to participate in further refining these proposals for consideration through the appropriate INSARAG governance mechanisms. Regarding the 2027 Asia-Pacific Regional Workplan, she noted that a written summary of the consultation discussions would be circulated for further reflection and committed Australia to supporting the development of a more measurable workplan to enable progress and achievements to be tracked more clearly.

Summarizing her key takeaways from the meeting, Ms. Noble emphasized that partnerships and capacity building are fundamental to strengthening regional capability; preparedness and interoperability must be continuously practiced; and INSARAG must continue to evolve towards more agile and multi-hazard approaches. She further stressed that the network should remain relevant and accessible to all members, with participation bringing mutual benefit, and concluded by reaffirming that people and communities must remain at the centre of INSARAG's work.

Ms. Wang thanked participants for their active participation, thoughtful contributions and the strong spirit of cooperation demonstrated throughout the meeting, with particular appreciation to Asia-Pacific colleagues who remained engaged virtually despite significant time differences. Reflecting on her first Regional Meeting as INSARAG Regional Focal Point, she highlighted the network's openness to new ideas and continuous improvement and noted that the meeting had once again demonstrated the strength of the Asia-Pacific INSARAG community, characterized by technical expertise, strong partnerships and a longstanding tradition of mutual assistance.

Looking ahead, Ms. Wang emphasized that despite the diversity of countries, capacities and contexts across the region, members share a common commitment to strengthening preparedness and interoperability and supporting one another through mutual assistance and international cooperation. She noted that follow-up to the meeting would continue through consolidation of the consultation outcomes and development of the 2027

Regional Workplan. She thanked Australia for its leadership as 2026 Regional Chair, Japan for its continued engagement as outgoing Chair and member of the regional Troika, Brazil for its generous hosting, the INSARAG Secretariat, facilitators, note-takers and colleagues supporting the meeting behind the scenes. She concluded by thanking members for the warm welcome extended to her as the new Regional Focal Point and reaffirmed her commitment to working closely with the regional network in the years ahead.

The meeting was formally closed, with participants proceeding to the subsequent INSARAG Global Meeting.

Annexes:

[Annex A: INSARAG AP Regional Meeting 2026 List of Participants](#)

[Annex B: INSARAG AP Regional Meeting Agenda 2026](#)

[Annex C-1: INSARAG AP Regional Meeting 2026 DAY1 PPT](#)

[Annex C-2: INSARAG AP Regional Meeting 2026 DAY2 PPT](#)

[Annex D: INSARAG&UNDAC Activities Calendar 2026&2027](#)

[Annex E: Concept Note Extended IER Cycle for Established USAR Teams](#)

[Annex F: Cover Letter-Concept Note Promoting IRNAP Adoption in the Asia-Pacific Region](#)

[Annex G: Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel Explainer](#)