



Chairperson's Summary: INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting 2026

6-7 July 2026, Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil



The INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting was held alongside the Fourth INSARAG Global Meeting in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, on 6-7 July 2026. The event was generously hosted by the Government of Brazil.

Day 1

Session 1 – Welcome and Official Opening

i. Opening and Welcome Remarks

Representatives from Brazil, including Minister Jose Solla, welcomed delegates, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to host the event, and highlighted the significance of hosting this meeting and discussing search and rescue issues, especially considering the recent earthquake in Venezuela. Participants observed a moment of silence for victims of the Venezuelan earthquake, with Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, INSARAG Secretary expressing solidarity and noting the involvement of international teams in the response. Mr. Rhodes Stampa explained the informal, yet focused nature of the team leaders meeting, emphasizing the role of team leaders as operational drivers and the importance of feedback loops between working groups and team leaders.

ii. Country Introduction and Participation

Delegates from over 30 countries introduced themselves and moderator acknowledged both in-person and online participants, with Mr. Lucien Jaggi, INSARAG Secretariat, moderating the remote attendees online to ensure broad engagement.

iii. Adoption of Agenda and Meeting Procedures

Mr. Camille Michel, Team Leaders Representative, confirmed the meeting agenda with participants, invited suggestions for changes, and outlined procedural matters such as group photos and session logistics. Participants were asked for suggestions or changes to the proposed agenda; with no objections, the agenda was adopted as distributed. Instructions were given for group photos and session transitions, and participants were reminded about the timing of coffee breaks and the use of QR codes to register and update their Team Leaders contact.

Session 2 – Global Updates and Key Developments

i. INSARAG Strategy 2026-2030 and Secretariat Updates

Mr. Martijn Viersma from the Secretariat presented the new INSARAG strategy for 2026–2030, outlining strategic objectives, program of work, and updates on team classifications, gender balance, and Secretariat staffing. The new strategy focuses on three main objectives: quality standards, flexible response models, and strengthening localization, with an emphasis on adapting INSARAG methodologies to regional contexts. The Secretariat will support nine IECs, six IERs, eight training courses, and multiple meetings in 2026, with 177 classifiers involved and a breakdown of team types and gender representation provided. Key Secretariat staff supporting the network were introduced, including Mr. Lucien Jaggi, Ms. Rui Wang (covering Asia-Pacific region), Ms. Katherine Barreto (Americas' region), and Ms. Lara Cansizoglu (Secretariat intern), with an invitation for participants to reach out with questions.

ii. INSARAG Secretariat Projects and Data Management Initiatives

Mr. Jaggi presented ongoing Secretariat projects, including improvements to the Virtual OSOCC, updates to team leader directories, exercise site registration, and the importance of maintaining current team fact sheets.

- **Virtual SOC 2.0 Development:** Plans were announced to develop a new version of the Virtual SOC, with a consultation process involving team leaders to ensure the platform meets operational needs without duplicating reporting.
- **Directory and Fact Sheet Updates:** Participants were reminded to update team leader registrations and fact sheets, as outdated information can hinder coordination during emergencies; suggestions included annual prompts for updates.
- **Exercise Site and Event Registration:** Teams were encouraged to register exercise sites and events open to the INSARAG network, with a new submission form available to facilitate broader participation and information sharing.
- **Training Accreditation Process:** Teams conducting INSARAG-accredited training were reminded to ensure facilitators are properly trained and to inform the Secretariat in advance for official recognition.

iii. Lessons from Venezuela and Meeting Recommendations

Mr. Camille Michel and participants discussed observations from the Venezuela response, the importance of formal after-action reviews, and recommendations for improving team leader engagement, working group participation, and digital meetings.

- **Venezuela Response Observations:** Participants shared initial observations from the Venezuela deployment, with a caution against drawing premature conclusions and a formal after-action review planned for later in the year.
- **Team Leader and Working Group Engagement:** Recommendations included organizing digital meetings to supplement annual physical gatherings, improving participation and accountability in working groups, and ensuring regular updates to contact lists and fact sheets.
- **Training and Classifier Development:** Suggestions were made to enhance classifier training through e-learning and online modules.

Session 3 – The New INSARAG Guidelines

Mr. John Cawcutt and Mr. Belit Tasdemir from the Guidelines Review Group presented updates on the 2026 INSARAG guidelines, the transition plan for their adoption, and the integration of lessons learned from recent operations.

- **Guidelines Revision Process:** The 2026 guidelines, incorporating findings from recent after-action reviews and operational feedback, will take effect on January 1, 2027, with teams able to use either the current or new guidelines during the transition period.
- **Digital Platform Launch:** The guidelines will be available on web and app-based platforms starting July 9, making them more accessible and searchable for all teams.
- **Checklist and Endorsement Procedures:** Discussion included the need to align the ICR checklist update cycle with the guidelines and to place the checklist directly within the guidelines section on the INSARAG website, with endorsement planned for the next ISG meeting in 2027.

Session 4 – INSARAG Information Management Updates

Mr. Jeff Maunders, Mr. Peter Wolf and Mr. Daryl Rush co-Chairs of the Information Management Working Group, presented the transition from ICMS 2.0 to ICMS 3.0, highlighting technical improvements, training plans, and the implementation timeline for the new system. They explained that ICMS 3.0 was developed in response to scalability and usability challenges identified during large-scale responses, such as the Türkiye and Syria earthquakes, with improvements in speed, integration, and data entry processes. The new system uses Quick Capture and Field Maps for rapid data collection, supports offline operation, and streamlines information flow from field teams to command points, enhancing situational awareness and operational decision-making. They highlighted that an online training platform will be launched alongside ICMS 3, with certification required for team members in key roles; face-to-face trainings are also planned. The online training course must be renewed every three years, following a model similar to Be Safe, to ensure users remain up to date. It is planned that certification will be mandatory for personnel working in the UCC (USAR Coordination Cell) but certification will not be required for all operational personnel who only use QuickCapture and field maps. It was noted that certification will be issued to individuals rather than teams as there is no team-level certification requirement.

ICMS 3.0 includes a field-user interface with five selectable panels, including quick guides, application links, tracking log and access to triage and victim extrication forms. The system can be used offline as it synchronizes data automatically once connectivity is restored. It incorporates QuickCapture functionality and field mapping tools to facilitate the collection, management, and updating of operational information.

Participants discussed providing ICMS access to non-classified teams for training purposes, particularly in regions such as the Americas where many local teams respond to emergencies. While access is currently limited to classified teams, there is an intention to develop simplified packages for non-classified teams, depending on their operational role.

ICMS 3.0 will be available from August or September, with a dual-system period until January 2027, after which ICMS 3.0 will become the standard for all teams. The IMWG representatives

noted that there are still ongoing developments. As an example, reporting suite is currently being developed to allow team leaders to monitor team progress through worksite reports.

Session 5 – USAR Coordination Handbook

Mr. Andrew Shurety, representing the Training Working Group, presented the key proposed changes to the USAR Coordination Handbook. The proposed revisions aim to standardise functional structures, improve information management, introduce greater flexibility in sectorisation arrangements, and update terminology to better reflect operational realities. The proposal aligns RDC and UCC structures around the four conventional management functions of Management, Planning, Operations and Logistics to simplify understanding, training and implementation across teams and functions. Information management was presented as the management of the information cycle to support decision-making and reinforced as a responsibility shared by all personnel rather than a single dedicated position.

A new provision would allow the appointment of an optional Chief of Staff within the UCC to support coordination, communication and operational tempo during complex incidents. Following the presentation, participants broke into three discussion groups to review the proposed changes to the handbook, with particular focus on the proposed amendments to the triage methodology. There was unanimous agreement across the groups that the current triage methodology should remain unchanged at this stage. Participants acknowledged that further work is required in this area; however, there was consensus that any future changes should be progressed methodically and informed by the findings of the Venezuela After-Action Review. Technical discussions regarding the triage form and supporting methodology will continue separately through the appropriate working groups.

Participants also discussed proposals to provide greater flexibility in sectorisation arrangements, allowing UCCs to adapt sectors based on operational requirements and lessons learned. The proposed renaming of the Damage Assessment Coordination Centre (DACC) to Engineering Damage Assessment Coordination Centre (EDACC) was supported as a means of better reflecting the function's focus on structural damage assessment

Session 6 – Search and Rescue in Flood Response, Latest Developments

Mr. Jeremy Stubb, SARWG Co-Chair joined on stage by members of the Working Groups, Mr. Gabriel Rodriguez, Mr. Carlos Tornquist, Mr. Arthur Vieira, Mr. Bennabi Abdelbasset, Mr. Grigory Korolkov presented achievements, strategic priorities, and future plans for the Flood Response Working Group.

The speakers recalled that the group was established in 2022 to facilitate discussion and sharing of flood response capabilities and noted that a voluntary directory of response teams was created, allowing countries to access expertise and request assistance. Following two to three years of collaboration, the group published a technical note on flood response capacity development, available on the INSARAG website. A common international standard was not adopted because existing national standards were considered sufficiently similar. The group has developed a new strategy extending to 2030 with key focus areas including: Quality standards, Localization, and Flexible response. The Working Group Planned initiatives include: A 20% increase in directory participation, Biannual webinars, A lessons-learned library covering: Operations, Exercises, and Training activities.

Session 7 – 11 years on, The INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (IRNAP). How IRNAP contributes to the localisation of the response?

A panel discussion was held to highlight the benefits and possible challenges of conducting an IRNAP. Panelist Sylvain Cheval, Annie Lacroix, Patricio Fuente and Lili, provided the audience with insights into the conduct of an IRNAP, and the benefits for their respective countries. The discussion highlighted a number of key points:

Participants discussed the IRNAP process as a mechanism for establishing national standards for USAR teams, while promoting the localization of response capacity. The process was seen as closely aligned with INSARAG methodology and certification principles, but adapted to national contexts, allowing countries to accredit multiple teams according to their operational needs. Members of the panel emphasized that IRNAP supports standardization, interoperability, improved governance, and stronger national preparedness systems, while also serving as a foundation for countries wishing to strengthen their disaster response capabilities before pursuing international classification.

The discussion highlighted several benefits of national accreditation processes, including improved operational standards, stronger coordination between response agencies, and better alignment of logistics, funding, and governance arrangements. At the same time, participants noted that successful implementation requires significant long-term investment in planning, resources, and stakeholder engagement. Countries with large numbers of rescue teams face additional challenges related to governance, quality assurance, mentoring, and maintaining consistent standards across diverse organizations.

Participants stressed that national accreditation systems should not be considered a lower standard than International Classification (IEC/IER). Rather, they complement international processes by building national capacity and creating a pathway toward international recognition where appropriate. The choice between national and international approaches depends on each country's risk profile, operational requirements, security considerations, and

strategic priorities. Flexibility was considered essential, with governments retaining authority over recognition periods, recertification requirements, and implementation modalities.

A recurring theme was the importance of investing in national expertise and mentoring systems. Participants observed that many countries initially depend on international support for mentoring and classification activities but can gradually develop their own cadre of mentors and classifiers. Examples from several countries demonstrated the value of shared training facilities, leadership development courses, and sustained capacity-building efforts. Long-term commitment from senior leadership, adequate funding, and dedicated human resources were identified as critical success factors for sustainable implementation.

Participants shared lessons learned from implementing classification processes in diverse environments. Key challenges included aligning national doctrine and documentation with INSARAG standards, addressing language and cultural differences, and ensuring that accreditation frameworks remain relevant to local realities. Smaller-scale exercises combining internationally classified and nationally accredited teams were recommended as effective mechanisms for mentoring, interoperability, and knowledge exchange. The discussions reinforced the importance of adapting classification and recertification systems to national circumstances while maintaining consistency with INSARAG principles.

The discussion concluded with an emphasis on strengthening regional support mechanisms to sustain classification processes and build national capacities. Participants highlighted the need for stronger regional structures capable of providing mentoring, technical assistance, leadership training, and doctrine dissemination. Agreed follow-up actions included expanding mentor and classifier development programmes, organizing future IRNAP leadership courses, submitting improvement proposals for ICMS, maintaining and updating flood response guidance and team directories, and sharing flood response lessons learned and after-action reports with the wider INSARAG community.

Day 2

Session 8 – INSARAG IEC/R Checklist Consultations

The GRG co-Chairs David Soshor and Annika Coll presented in detail the proposed revisions to the INSARAG IEC/R Checklist as part of the regular five-year quality assurance cycle. Discussions highlighted the need to improve clarity and consistency of requirements, address the integration of emerging technologies, better reflect national legislation and standards, and place greater emphasis on the outcomes to be achieved rather than prescriptive methods. While participants supported efforts to simplify and modernize the checklist, there was strong agreement that any changes must preserve the integrity and credibility of the IEC/R system and maintain high-quality assurance standards.

The consultation reviewed a range of proposed amendments, including clearer wording, improved alignment of evaluation criteria, enhanced medical requirements, updated technology provisions, and greater recognition of the obligation of classified teams to contribute classifiers to the system. Participants also discussed adjustments intended to increase flexibility and reduce costs, such as a possible IEC/IER exercise duration of 36 to 48 hours, while ensuring that operational capability and assessment rigor are not compromised.

Team Leaders welcomed the extensive consultation process undertaken by the IEC/R Quality Assurance Working Group and emphasized the importance of continued engagement with the network as the revisions are finalized. There was broad support for improving classifier preparation and quality assurance mechanisms, clarifying roles and responsibilities within the IEC/R process, and ensuring the checklist remains fit for purpose in a changing operational environment. The revised checklist will continue to be refined through Working Group discussions, with formal endorsement expected to be considered by the INSARAG Steering Group in March 2027.

Session 9 – Team Leaders Recommendations

This session was held for team leaders to reflect on a number of initiatives and possible improvements to the network to prepare recommendations for the INSARAG Steering Group Meeting. Three group discussions were held on Working Group Governance, Information Management, and Classification System.

1. Governance and Working Group Review

A key discussion focused on the future governance structure of the INSARAG Working Groups. The GRG led the group discussion on this topic and presented the findings in plenary. The participants were invited to consider establishing a broader Operational Working Group, potentially supported by several specialized sub-groups, to manage new areas of work. It was mentioned that a review of the current Working Group Terms of Reference (ToR) will be undertaken. With that, the two GRG Co-Chairs will develop a proposal and implementation plan to be presented to Team Leaders at the next meeting, before being submitted to the ISG for endorsement. In the discussions, it was also noted that the Terms of Reference of the Team Leader Representatives will also be reviewed and clarified.

It was noted that the vast majority of Working Group activities are operational and tactical in nature and there was debate on whether Working Groups should continue reporting through the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG), or report through the Team Leaders Group, given the operational focus of their work. It was agreed that further analysis and consultation are required before a final recommendation is made.

Overall, there was broad agreement on the direction of travel, although additional work is needed to define the governance model.

3. Communication and Information Management

The Information Management Working Group led the discussion on this topic and presented the findings in plenary. There was a strong support for developing communication channels that can be used outside deployment periods, similar to existing Team Leader communication networks. Such platforms would allow members to exchange information and experiences, ask questions and seek support, share lessons learned, contribute feedback on INSARAG tools and systems. Some challenges were noted, including that communication channels would need to be managed across several different applications and platforms. Digital tools such as INSARAG.org and the Virtual OSOCC still depend heavily on active user engagement and community participation to function effectively, therefore a simpler and more dynamic tool such as WhatsApp would be better suited.

4. Classification System and Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Working Group emphasized the importance of maintaining INSARAG's quality standards. They led the group discussion on this topic and presented the below findings in plenary.

Classification and reclassification remain essential to quality control mechanisms within the INSARAG system.

The groups stressed that maintaining the credibility and quality of INSARAG responses must remain a priority and emphasized the need to preserve and build upon the achievements developed over more than two decades of INSARAG operations. Looking ahead, participants noted that the current INSARAG Guidelines have been endorsed through 2030, the next formal review process is expected to begin around 2028, and that many of the governance, classification, and organizational issues discussed during the meeting are likely to form part of the next revision cycle. As part of the process, it will be key to ensure the quality of the IEC/R remains high. Different regions hold differing views on some issues such as the duration of classification cycles, with some supporting extensions and others favoring the current approach. Other suggestions included providing training to Classifiers, ensuring feedback is provided on Classifiers' contributions during the IEC/R, and support given to the Secretariat on Classifiers management, etc. The Working Group agreed to compile and share best practices, lessons learned, and challenges identified through advisory and classification processes to inform the next updates of the Guidelines.

Session 10 – Closing Remarks, Review of Achievements and Next Steps

The Host and the INSARAG Secretariat provided short closing remarks highlighting the importance of the USAR Team Leaders in INSARAG system. The speakers thanked the participants for their commitment and contributing to modernization of INSARAG systems and

standards, noting that the system continues strengthening with new guidelines that will be effective in January 2027, the launch of ICMS 3.0, the plan for a new Classifiers training, and the finalisation of an updated IEC/R Checklist, amongst the different initiatives that are part of the new strategic plan. It was recalled that that the meeting also emphasized the growing importance of IRNAP as a tool for localization and national capacity development, which offers a solid alternative to the IEC pathway.

The Secretariat announced that the 2027 INSARAG Team Leader will be held in Busan in February 2027 at the invitation of South Korea.