

Chairman's Summary – INSARAG AEME Regional Meeting 2017

Overview

The INSARAG Africa, Europe and Middle East (AEME) Regional Group meeting was held on 14-15 November 2017 in Istanbul, Turkey, generously hosted by the Government of Turkey and the Disaster and Emergency Presidency of Turkey (AFAD). The meeting brought together 85 participants (please see [Annex A](#)) from the region and beyond representing 27 countries aimed. The Regional meeting aimed at electing a Regional Troika 2018, finalizing the INSARAG AEME Regional Plan for 2018, discussing the key INSARAG issues following the 2017 INSARAG Steering Group meeting, namely: IER Pre-Greening Arrangements, Light Teams Quality Assurance Standards, National Accreditation Processes, UCC and KoBo implementation and IEC/R Requirements and the INSARAG Guidelines Version 2020 and other essential matters. The event was co-facilitated by Turkey, the INSARAG Global Chair and OCHA FCSS (the INSARAG Secretariat). The presentations, resource materials and products of the respective sessions are available in the INSARAG website: <http://insarag.org>

Session 1 – Opening Statements, Adoption of Agenda, Report on Issues Arising

On 14 November 2017, the INSARAG AEME Regional Group meeting was opened by Mr. Irfan Keskin, representing AFAD, Ambassador Manuel Bessler, the INSARAG Global Chair and Mr. Jesper Lund, Chief of Emergency Services Branch (ESB) and Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) of OCHA, the INSARAG Secretariat.

Mr. Keskin extended his welcome to the participants on behalf of the host country, stressing the importance to further develop international standards enabling different countries to speak the same language, use the same terminology while responding to disasters (domestically or internationally) or receiving international assistance to complement national response efforts. He gave an overview of the Turkey USAR capacity, noting that Ankara and Istanbul Search and Rescue Teams had already entered the international arena and the capability of the team in Izmir was being developed as per the INSARAG guidelines. Moreover, Mr. Keskin expressed appreciation to the INSARAG Global Chair and Secretariat and to the incoming AEME Regional Group Chair – France.

Ambassador Bessler joined Mr. Keskin in welcoming the participants. Referring to the recent earthquakes in Italy, Mexico and Iraq/Iran, he noted the importance of getting fit for the future and strengthening the response readiness and response approach, emphasizing the criticality of the needs-driven response as opposed to the one driven by politics. Ambassador Bessler drew the attention of the participants to the fact that most classified teams are concentrated in Europe and the United States and that more efforts are needed to further strengthen capacity in other regions. He further expressed appreciation to Turkey as the host, the Netherlands and France as co-chairs of the AEME Regional Group and the INSARAG Secretariat under the leadership of Mr. Jesper Lund. Ambassador Bessler noted that OCHA was undergoing important changes and appealed to the Member States to extend their support to the INSARAG Secretariat which plays an important role in maintaining INSARAG. He concluded by encouraging active participation in the plenary and break out group discussions highlighting that INSARAG is only as strong as its members.

Mr. Jesper Lund noted the essential role of Turkey in the international arena, applauding the rapid deployment of their USAR teams to Iraq in the aftermath of the earthquake in Halabja. He commanded Turkey for repeatedly demonstrating not only the traditional response to earthquakes but also a flexible response to forest fires in Georgia and explosion in Somalia earlier this year. Mr. Lund emphasized the need for continuous efforts around capacity building and understanding of best practices during a response and in ensuring that international humanitarian partners are able to support and plug into national response systems efficiently and effectively. He further elaborated that exercises such as a regional INSARAG Earthquake Response exercise provide an opportunity to further enhance interoperability between international and regional response teams, tools and services in support of the national efforts.

The meeting Agenda was adopted by participants - [Annex B](#).

Session 2 – Introduction of Participants and Adoption of the Agenda

After a brief introduction of the participants, the meeting agenda ([Annex B](#)) was adopted.

Session 3 – Review of AEME in 2017 and Key Updates and Developments in INSARAG in 2017

Ambassador Bessler reflected on the activities and achievements undertaken by the AEME group in 2017, and Mr. Lund highlighted the key issues arising from the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) meeting of 2017. Chairman Summaries of the ISG and other regional meetings are available in the INSARAG website.

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Session 4 – National Accreditation, Turkey

Ms. Ayse Gultekin presented the outcomes and the key steps of the process of the National Accreditation Programme (NAP) successfully completed by Izmir AFAD Search and Rescue Brigade under the overall oversight of the INSARAG Secretariat and supervision of four evaluators from THW. Ms. Gultekin took the opportunity to extend their appreciation to Mr. Peter Goharaj and his team and the INSARAG Secretariat, the Deputy Prime Minister, the President and the Deputy President of AFAD for the invaluable support provided to the programme. She informed the meeting that the next NAP evaluation would be carried out for Bursa Search and Rescue Brigade with the details to be shared on Virtual OSOCC. To conclude, Ms. Gultekin expressed their readiness to support countries planning to go through the NAP and invited participants to take part in the upcoming evaluation as observers. Following the briefing, Mr. Lund presented ADAF with the NAP certificate.

Session 5 - Topics arising from ISG 2017: Discussions and Proposals from the AP Group

INSARAG working group facilitated the breakout discussions on the five main topics, and the outcomes of the discussions with participants' opinions are summarized in ANNEX C.

Session 6 – Working Groups Update

The INSARAG Working Group Chairs and representatives provided an update on their ongoing work to make INSARAG fit for the future. The work of the INSARAG working groups are available for review in the INSARAG website.

Session 7 – Discussions and Proposals on the AEME Workplan 2018 from the AEME Group

INSARAG Secretariat facilitated break-out group discussions on 2018 workplan in three sub-regions: Africa and Middle East, Commonwealth of Independent States, and Europe. The workplan was guided by the INSARAG Strategy 2017-2020 approved at the ISG 2017 meeting. The AEME sub-regional groups developed the 2018 workplan (Annex D) and welcomed an initiative to undertake the AEME USAR Capability Mapping exercise currently in progress in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Session 8 – Asia-Pacific Regional Exercise – lessons learnt

Mr. Zainal provided an update on the Earthquake Response exercise conducted in Malaysia in September 2017 which brought together 200 international participants from 45 countries and agencies, and 200 national participants representing 24 agencies. He described the benefits of the exercise, in particular, testing and refining the national response plans for large-scale disasters. Mr. Zainal noted that the valuable lessons learnt as a very important step to strengthening disaster response readiness for Malaysia, and valuable lessons were learnt from the coordination arrangements with both national and international stakeholders. Details of the INSARAG Earthquake Response Exercise (ERE) package for use by national teams and the exercise are available at <http://insarag.org>. A video on the highlights of the exercise can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/pv73eIHd1J4>.

Session 9 – INSARAG USAR Capacity Assessment of Palestinian Civil Defence

Mr. Raed Asad, Palestinian Civil Defence, briefed the participants on the national response arrangements, international assistance extended by Palestine from 2010 to 2017 and outcomes of the USAR capacity Assessment mission to Palestine requested in 2015. This was preceded by a comprehensive risk analysis. Mr. Asad shared a five-year road map for the country starting with three light teams and ending with the INSARAG classified medium USAR team. The INSARAG Secretariat explained that the initiative was a part of a big capacity development project implemented in three countries (Jordan, Israel and Palestine). The detailed report on the capacity assessment mission is available upon request.

Session 10 – Lessons Learnt from Italy Earthquake Response

Mr. Emanuele Pianese, Central Directorate for Emergency and Technical Rescue, delivered a detailed presentation on the latest USAR experiences in Italy and gave an overview of the national search and rescue capacity, structure, quality factors (homogeneity, singularity and integration/interoperability), deployment procedures and emergency deployments.

Session 11 – USAR teams' deployment to Hurricane Irma

The presentation prepared by the Netherlands was not delivered due to the time constraints, the outcomes of the deployments will be shared and discussed at the ISG meeting in February 2018. It is available on the INSARAG web-site together with other presentations and supporting materials.

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Session 12 – Chairman's Summary of Key Decisions and Directions for 2017

Mr. Jesper Lund and Mr. Irfan Keskin summarised the key recommendations from the AEME meeting 2017 to be brought to the attention of the ISG in 2018. The brief summary of the recommendations is presented below:

i. Outcomes of the break-out group discussions:

- 1) **Pre-Greening IERs** – IER Pre-greening procedures need to be clear (at the moment they are subject to Chief Classifier's interpretation); classifiers can check Pre-Greened items during the exercise; a separate checklist should be developed with more emphasis put on management and coordination (UCC) and not on operational skills.
- 2) **Light Teams** – A LT concept should be needs driven, suggested path: first responder-national capacity-national accreditation-cross boarding-international deployment; heavy and medium teams may benefit from LT standards to reconfigure themselves into a lighter version.
- 3) **National Accreditation**- There is a need to clarify the implications and requirements for the national accreditation process and the INSARAG External Standards for the recognition of the accreditation process. Several countries recognized the importance of comply with the INSARAG Guidelines when conducting a national accreditation and they agree about the relevance to conduct a national accreditation instead of an IEC. Suggestion is to develop an example starting with one interested country to then extend the example to the rest of the region.
- 4) **UCC - 01/01/2018** – most teams are yet to get ready to implement UC/KoBo; independent deployment of a UCC to be considered; training courses to be delivered including additional UC ToT courses.
- 5) **Kobo** – training required on both data collection and analysis; issues in using KoBo could arise around data protection (access to sensitive information); disaster management authorities need to be briefed on KoBo; translation issues may be encountered.
- 6) **INSARAG Guidelines 2020**– Vol 1: responsibilities of donor and recipient countries; resilience, response readiness, benefits of requesting classified teams to be reflected; Vol 2: preemptive ASR1; Vol 2C: consistency between IEC/IER processes to be ensured; Vol 4: forum for discussions, best practices, information exchange to be initiated.

- ii. **AEME Workplan 2018** – guided by the INSARAG Strategy for 2017-2020, the AEME group discussed the two Goals, 12 objectives and related activities for the region. The AEME USAR Capability plan will be developed by the member states remotely with the support of the INSARAG Secretariat to ensure coherence between actions and the Regional Strategy within a five-year framework to be presented by member states for discussion at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnership week in Geneva 2018.

Session 13 – Welcoming the AP Troika 2018 and Other Announcements

The AEME group welcomed the AEME Troika for 2018 where France will be the AEME Chair, Italy as the incoming chair, and Turkey as the outgoing chair. The representatives thanked the AEME group for a dedication to further strengthen INSARAG in the region and a strong commitment to implement the activities envisaged by the workplans.

Member States Announcements

Country	Activity	Time frame
Armenia	Earthquake Response Exercise; public awareness exercise	December 2018
Azerbaijan	Earthquake Response Exercise	2018
Finland	KoBo Training	After March 2018
France	UC course	2018
Italy	IEC; two UC courses	
Italy	AEME Regional Group Chairmanship	2019
Malaysia	UC course	2018
Switzerland	SIMEX	October 2018
Tunisia	IEC preparations	2018-2020(2021)

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Session 14 – Closing Statements

Mr. Lund, the Secretariat, reiterated his appreciation to Turkey for the commitment and dedication for the Regional INSARAG Chairmanship in 2017 and for generous hosting of the Regional meeting. He stated that the chairmanship would be handed over to France in the end of the year and that the Netherlands would be leaving the Troika at the same time. He further thanked member states for their kind support to the INSARAG activities and active contribution to the discussions.

Mr. Carlo Post, the outgoing chair, expressed his appreciation to all the member states for the invaluable contribution to strengthening the INSARAG network, sharing the vision and perspectives and finding a common ground, essential to further promote the INSARAG agenda in the region and beyond.

Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative in Turkey in her closing remarks highlighted the criticality of having a coherent international system to ensure effective and efficient response to natural disasters which often overwhelm the national response capacity. She expressed her appreciation to the member states for the important work done to save lives and to boost the response readiness in the region.

Mr Irfan Keskinl thanked the Secretariat and the Global Chair for co-organizing the INSARAG AEME Regional meeting 2017 and the member states for the active participation and contribution to the discussions.

The next Regional Meeting will be held in France in the second half of 2018.

ANNEXES:

Annex A: Participants List

Annex B: Meeting Agenda

Annex C: Discussions and Proposals from the AEME Group on ISG Topics Arising for regional discussions

Annex D: Discussions and Proposals on the AEME Workplan 2018