

**OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF
HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
(OCHA)**



**International
Search and Rescue
Advisory Group**

**Report on the fifth Meeting of the
INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe**

Hammamet, Tunisia, 16 – 19 November 2000

UNITED NATIONS

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**Fifth Meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe
16 to 19 November 2000
Hammamet, Tunisia**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The fifth meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Regional Group Africa/Europe was organized by the Tunisian Civil Protection in Hammamet, Tunisia, from 16 to 19 November 2000 and funded by the Swiss Government. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in its capacity as INSARAG Secretariat, co-organized the meeting.
2. The meeting was officially opened by Mr. Abdallah Kallel, Minister of Interior of Tunisia after introductory remarks by Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Deputy Director and Chief, Disaster Response Branch (DRB), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Geneva. Mr. Kallel emphasized that the Tunisian Government paid great attention to the work and achievements of INSARAG and he highlighted that this was the first meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe, held on the African continent.
3. The meeting began with an overview of the international emergency response mechanism and INSARAG's role in it, followed by presentations on lessons learned and best practices applied in recent emergencies. Participants were also updated about the results of the meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Asia/Pacific, which was held in Seoul, South Korea, from 3 to 5 November 2000. Several very interesting presentations were made focussing on the risks to petrochemical industries and the possible prevention measures. Also the consequences of recent floods and wildland fires were discussed as well as the need of disaster prevention in these fields.
4. In the next phase of the meeting, participants were divided into five rotating Working Groups in order to discuss in depth topics related to international emergency management concepts and new technologies to enhance coordination and information management during emergencies.
5. In parallel to the rotating Working Groups, the Regional INSARAG Working Group on Fire, which was formally established at this meeting, met to develop a structure and workplan for the next year. The meeting confirmed the nomination of Mr. Peter Nixon, Assistant Inspector of Fire Services, HM Fire Service Inspectorate, Home Office, United Kingdom, as chairman of the Working Group.
6. Based on discussion following the presentations as well as on conclusions from the sessions of the Working Groups, the meeting developed a number of recommendations entitled 'Hammamet Declaration' (attached as ANNEX I). The

Hammamet Declaration was endorsed by all participants.

7. The participants expressed warm appreciation to the Government of Tunisia and Switzerland for their support to the meeting of the regional group and to the United Kingdom for considering to host the next meeting in 2001.

**Fifth Meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe
16 to 19 November 2000
Hammamet, Tunisia**

Final Report

Annexes:

- I) Hammamet Declaration
- II) Opening Remarks by Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Deputy Director, OCHA Geneva and Chief, Disaster Response Branch (DRB)
- III) Opening Remarks by the Minister of Interior of Tunisia, Mr. Abdallah Kallel
- IV) Agenda
- V) List of participants

1. The fifth meeting of the Regional Group of the International Search Advisory Group (INSARAG) Africa/Europe was held in Hammamet, Tunisia from 16 to 19 November 2000. The meeting was hosted by the Tunisian Civil Protection and funded by the Swiss Government.
2. The meeting, in which, over 100 representatives from 35 countries and organizations participated, focused mainly on the response to technological disasters with the objective to analyze recent emergencies and evaluate future risks. Furthermore, participants had the opportunity to exchange views in order to draw conclusions to improve cooperation in preparedness and disaster response in the future.
3. The Vice-Chairman, Mr. Moncef Belkhir, Director General, Civil Protection, Tunisia, welcomed the participants and gave the floor to Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Deputy Director and Chief, Disaster Response Branch (DRB), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Geneva, for introductory remarks.
4. Mr. Putman-Cramer expressed his appreciation to the Tunisian Authorities for hosting the meeting and thanked the Swiss Government for funding the meeting. After a brief summary of the achievements of INSARAG, Mr. Putman-Cramer summarized OCHA's view on the future work of INSARAG. This included the promotion of increased involvement of INSARAG member countries in the work of the Regional Groups and carrying out joint training and exercises within the regions, as well as increasing "cross-fertilization" among regions by inviting observers to participate in meetings of other Regional Groups. He encouraged participants to support the development of the convention for the deployment and utilization of international urban Search and Rescue (SAR) teams, as recommended by the United Nations Secretary General in his report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and for which the Swiss Government had agreed to take the lead (the opening remarks of Mr. Putman-Cramer are attached as ANNEX II).

5. The meeting was opened by Mr. Abdallah Kallel, Minister of Interior of Tunisia, who welcomed the participants and thanked the Swiss Government for funding the meeting. He explained that for the Tunisian Government disaster prevention and preparedness is a high priority. He underlined the Tunisian Government's great appreciation for the achievements of INSARAG and emphasized the value of information exchange and the cooperation in the field of training. He stressed the importance of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe to provide a platform for extending the basis of joint work and fruitful cooperation between its members and to strengthen the ties of solidarity between countries of the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean. The Minister closed his opening remarks by wishing every success at the meeting and participants a pleasant stay in Tunisia (the opening remarks of the Minister of Interior are attached as ANNEX III).
6. The Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe, Mr. Dietrich Laepke, Deputy Director, German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), Germany, introduced the objectives and the agenda of the meeting, which focused on environmental and industrial risks and risk prevention. Additional objectives of the meeting were to introduce modern emergency management technology and to give participants the opportunity to exchange views and draw conclusions to improve cooperation in preparedness and disaster response in the future. The agenda was adopted by participants (attached as ANNEX IV).
7. The meeting continued with an overview of OCHA's International Emergency Response System and on lessons learned and best practices in recent emergencies. The following presentations were made:
 - The International Emergency Response System and INSARAG's role, by Mr. Arjun Katoch, Chief, Field Coordination Support Unit (FCSU), Disaster Response Branch, UN OCHA-Geneva;
 - Briefing on the meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Asia/Pacific, which was held in Seoul, South Korea, from 3 to 5 November 2000 (Mr. Arjun Katoch);
 - Case Study on the Izmit refinery fire in the Turkey earthquake of August 1999, by Mr. Dirk Kalthier, Frankfurt Fire Rescue Service, Germany;
 - Presentation on seismic risks to petrochemical installations by Prof. Cetin Yilmaz, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey;
 - Presentation on global fire monitoring by Dr. Johann G. Goldammer, Director of the Fire Ecology Research Group, University of Freiburg, Germany, and Head of the Global Fire Monitoring Centre;
 - Presentation on Tunisian experiences in industrial risk management by Col.

Habib Ben Hassine, Civil Protection Tunis;

- Presentation on seismic risks to petrochemical industries by Mr. Mohamed Farroukhi, Regional Director of Civil Protection, Algeria;
 - Problems of floods caused by torrential rainfalls by Mr. Mohammed Dguadeg, Regional Commander, Civil Protection, Morocco;
 - Presentation on the Mozambique floods of February 2000, by Dr. Silvio Langa, Director, National Institute of Disaster Management, Mozambique;
 - Presentation on chemical risk prevention by Mr. Volker Lambrecht, Chief, Fire Brigade BASF, Ludwigshafen, Germany;
 - Presentation on the structure and role of the newly formed Working Group on Fire by Mr. Peter Nixon, Assistant Inspector of Fire Services, HM Fire Service Inspectorate, Home Office, United Kingdom.
8. In the next phase of the meeting, participants were divided into five rotating Working Groups in order to discuss in depth topics related to international emergency management concepts and new technologies to enhance coordination and information management during emergencies:
- Cooperation between OCHA and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) on response to environmental emergencies, facilitated by Mr. Vladimir Sakharov, Head, Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, Disaster Response Branch, OCHA-Geneva.
Conclusions: The session was considered very useful by participants, most of whom were not familiar with the responsibilities and coordination mechanisms between OCHA and UNEP as well as resulting implications for the international community.
 - The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system and the On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC), facilitated by Mr. Arjun Katoch, Chief, Field Coordination Support Unit (FCSU), Disaster Response Branch, OCHA-Geneva.
Conclusions: Although most participants were familiar with the UNDAC and OSOCC concepts, the discussion in this session provided valuable insight for new members into the principles of UNDAC and OSOCC and introduced new perspectives for all participants.
 - The International Search and Rescue Response (INSARR) Guidelines, facilitated by Mr. Joseph Bishop, Senior Consultant to OCHA.
Conclusions: The session, which included a brief overview of the INSARR Guidelines and their implications for preparedness and deployment of SAR teams, was considered very useful, as not all participants were familiar with

contents and implications of the Guidelines. The Guidelines can be accessed on the INSARAG homepage on the Internet at http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/programs/response/fcsu/insarag.

- The Virtual Operations Coordination Centre on the Internet, facilitated by Mr. Thomas Peter, Deputy Chief, FCSU, Disaster Response Branch, OCHA-Geneva.

Conclusions: The Virtual Operations Centre on the Internet allows receiving and responding countries and organizations to exchange information during ongoing emergencies simultaneously. The session was received with great interest by participants, most of whom requested a user account for the Site. User accounts will be provided soon after the meeting and users will be notified by e-mail about login formalities. The Internet address of the Virtual Operations Centre is <http://www7.itu.int/VirtualOSOCC>.

- Video Conferencing, facilitated by Mr. Claus Höllein, Senior Training Expert, THW, Germany, and Mr. Jesper Lund, Field Coordination Support Unit (FCSU), Disaster Response Branch, OCHA-Geneva.

Conclusions: The session, which introduced the method of using video-conferencing to facilitate information exchange during emergencies at relatively low costs, provoked interest and positive feedback from participants.

9. In parallel to the rotating Working Groups, the Regional INSARAG Working Group on Fire met to develop a structure and workplan for the next year. The Working Group is chaired by Mr. Peter Nixon, Assistant Inspector of Fire Services, Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, United Kingdom. In the meeting, it was agreed that the Working Group on Fire would consist of three elements, namely: 1) Wildland Fires; 2) Hazardous Materials; and 3) Industrial Fires. The goals of the Working Group on Fire are to provide guidance and advice on fire-related topics to national Focal Points as well as to OCHA through the joint OCHA/UNEP Unit. The Working Group on Fire identified its permanent tasks as 1) to encourage a continuous exchange of information through the Internet and 2) to support OCHA/UNEP when required by providing the expertise and knowledge of its members. The Working Group scheduled the following tasks for 2001: 1) to seek to incorporate appropriate fire and HAZMAT topics into the INSARAG Guidelines, and; 2) to prepare the establishment of a database on human resources, equipment information sources and evaluation of missions (lessons learned).
10. The final day of the meeting started with a presentation of the project proposal for the development of the convention for the deployment and utilization of international SAR teams, as recommended by the UN Secretary General in his report to the ECOSOC. This presentation was made by Mr. Piero Calvi-Pariseti, Senior Consultant to OCHA.
11. Then the meeting discussed a number of recommendations, entitled 'Hammamet Declaration', which were developed based on inputs and discussions following the

presentations and the sessions of the Working Groups. The Hammamet Declaration (attached as ANNEX I), was endorsed by all participants. The following points were agreed following plenary discussions:

- Pt. 5) the establishment of a regional Working Group on Fire related disasters, including wildland fires, hazardous materials, and the threat to major hazard installations;
 - Pt 6) to increasingly use advanced technologies, where appropriate, in disaster response and disaster response preparedness activities;
 - Pt 7) to hold elections to the position of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Regional Group Africa/Europe as well as regional Working Groups on a yearly basis, starting from next year (2001);
 - Pt 8) the need for skills training standards for search and rescue teams to be developed. The meeting asked the Secretariat to task the INSARAG Working Group on Training to prepare such standards;
 - Pt 9) the need for joint training and exercises;
 - Pt 10) to ensure cross-fertilization among INSARAG regional groups by having observers from other regional groups attend regional meetings;
 - Pt 11) to undertake initial steps by a Core Group of interested countries, and with initial support of Switzerland, towards the elaboration of a Convention on Search and Rescue.
12. During the discussion of the ‘Hammamet Declaration’, participants expressed the need to improve the exchange of information on given issues, such as training events, meetings and related publications. It was recommended that FCSU, in its capacity as INSARAG Secretariat, when informed of such matters and events would publish and maintain these topics on the INSARAG homepage at http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/programs/response/fcsu/insarag. An additional Internet site within OCHA’s Reliefweb that provides an overview on humanitarian training events is the Humanitarian Assistance Training Inventory (HATI) at <http://www.reliefweb.int/training>.
13. Mr. Arjun Katoch conveyed to all members of the meeting that Australia had extended an invitation to all international SAR teams to attend an International SAR Team Leaders meeting in Sidney, Australia, from 3 to 5 December 2001. Details of the meeting will be placed on the INSARAG Website.
14. The chairman gave the floor to Mr. Toni Frisch, Chairman of INSARAG and Deputy Director, Division of Humanitarian Aid and Swiss Disaster Relief, Switzerland. Mr. Frisch expressed his appreciation that the Regional Group

Africa/Europe had now been expanded by members from African countries and, for the first time had met on the African continent. He congratulated the Chairman and participants for the outcome of the meeting and encouraged participating countries to support the creation of the International Urban Search and Rescue Convention.

15. The host of the meeting and Vice Chairman, Mr. Moncef Belkhir, thanked the participants for their constructive input and cooperation and OCHA for the support of the meeting. He reiterated his appreciation to the Swiss Government for funding the meeting and emphasized the importance that the Tunisian Government attached to the work of INSARAG.
16. Mr. Putman-Cramer thanked the Chairman, Mr. Dietrich Laepke, and the host, Mr. Moncef Belkhir, for conducting and organizing this successful meeting. He reiterated his thanks to the Swiss Government for their continuous support to INSARAG. He stressed the importance of such regional INSARAG meetings to establish new contacts and to strengthen established links between members of the INSARAG family, which is an important factor to improve coordination and cooperation of practitioners in international emergency response operations.
17. The Chairman, Mr. Dietrich Laepke, thanked the Tunisian Government, the Tunisian Civil Protection, the Swiss Government, OCHA and all participants for their support and cooperation and closed the meeting.

**International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
INSARAG
Meeting of INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe
Hammamet, Tunisia, 16 - 19**

Hammanet Declaration

- 1) Participants highly appreciated having a conference of the INSARAG Africa/Europe group held on the African continent - for the first time - with 35 countries/organisations participating. The following countries and organizations were represented:

COUNTRIES			ORGANIZATIONS
Algeria	Greece	Senegal	F.E.U.
Afrique du Sud	Hungary	Slovakia	O.I.P.C
Austria	Islande	Spain	L.P.A.
Cameroon	Korea	Sweden	I.F.R.C
Cyprus	Libya	Switzerland	J.M.S.F
Czech Republic	Maroc	Turkey	UN - OCHA
Denmark	Mozambique	Tunisia	
France	Netherlands	United Kingdom	
Finland	Niger	USA	
Germany	Poland		

- 2) The conference reiterated the benefits of the further development of co-operation between African and European countries in the area of the disaster response, disaster response preparedness and prevention.
- 3) The conference recommended that the necessary exchange of information and transfer of know-how, as well as the joint establishment of best practices on the basis of lessons learnt, be intensified by practitioners and experts in their respective fields.
- 4) On the basis of case studies reviewed, the necessity for implementing adequate prevention related measures, to industries and infrastructure, is considered essential.
- 5) On the basis of recognized specificities, and the requirement of special skills in this connection, the participants agreed upon the need for, and the establishment of, a working group on fire-related disasters, including wildland fires, hazardous materials, and the threat to major hazard installations (including petrochemical installations) located in disaster-prone areas.
- 6) The conference endorsed the concept of increasingly using advanced technologies, where appropriate, in disaster response and disaster response preparedness activities; in this respect, the conference strongly supports the use of modern information and communication technologies for the purpose of co-ordination.
- 7) The conference recommends that the Regional Group Africa/Europe meets on a yearly basis and as often as possible on the African continent, this also to facilitate the participation of African delegations and to benefit from their experience and

- knowledge. It is recommended that in the future the chairman, the vice-chairman and the chairmen of the regional working groups be elected at each meeting.
- 8) The conference endorsed the recommendation, made at the recent Asian/Pacific INSARAG meeting, to develop common standards of training and to develop a method of certification of institutes providing search and rescue course, to enhance quality control.
 - 9) The conference endorsed the need for joint training and exercises, thereby reinforcing national, subregional and regional capacities.
 - 10) The conference endorsed the concept of cross-fertilization among regional groups also by having participants from other groups attend regional meetings.
 - 11) The conference recommended that initial steps should be undertaken, by a Core Group of interested countries, and with the initial support of Switzerland, towards the elaboration of a Convention on Search and Rescue.
 - 12) The Conference extended their thanks to the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, the INSARAG Secretariat and the host-country, Tunisia, for their respective roles in ensuring the Conference's success.

Hammamet
18 November 2000

**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE ADVISORY GROUP
(INSARAG)**

Meeting of INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe
Hammamet, Tunisia, 16-19 November 2000

Statement by
Gerhard Putman-Cramer
Deputy Director and Chief, Disaster Response Branch
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations

M. Le Ministre
M. Le Gouverneur de Nabeul
Mr. Belkhir, Director General, Civil Protection of Tunisia
Mr. Laepke, Chairman, INSARAG Regional Group for Africa/Europe
M. Le Secrétaire Général de l'Organisation Internationale de la Protection Civile
Distinguished delegates and representatives of the authorities, organizations and agencies participating in this conference
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the INSARAG Secretariat and OCHA, we are particularly pleased to welcome all of you, here in Hammamet, to this well attended Conference. We are particularly pleased to welcome new members of the INSARAG family and we believe that your presence is important to strengthen the network of emergency responders represented by INSARAG and its regional groups. We are also extremely pleased to see old members here, many of whom we have worked with in the field and all of whom we consider to be colleagues and friends.

To begin with, I should like to thank the Tunisian Government and the Authorities involved, in particular Mr. Moncef Belkhir, Director General of the Tunisian Civil Protection and Vice Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe, for hosting the meeting. I should also like to thank the Swiss Government for funding this conference.

INSARAG was established with the double objective of improving relief operations at the site of a disaster as well as increasing and accelerating the availability of competent resources, local and international, for such operations.

Since it was set up in 1991, INSARAG has achieved very tangible results. Through the commitment of its members in investing time and resources in the work of INSARAG, these achievements include:

- 1) The establishment of a worldwide informal network of disaster response practitioners from responding and receiving countries: who exchange information on lessons learned and best practices in disaster response and preparedness on a regular basis.

- 2) Guidelines for international Search and Rescue response: to provide guidance for countries and organizations to train and equip relief teams, which are envisaged to participate in international relief operations.
- 3) The On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) concept: to ensure that international relief teams actively participate in the coordination effort on-site, in close cooperation with national and local authorities as well as the United Nations. The INSARAG Secretariat has also developed the Virtual Operations Coordination Centre, on the Internet, to provide a platform for real-time information exchange between involved actors during disaster response operations.

During the course of this year, the INSARAG Regional Group for Asia/Pacific has been revived. This Group held its second meeting only two weeks back, from 3 to 5 November in Seoul, Korea. In the beginning of 2001, it is planned to re-establish also the INSARAG Regional Group for the Americas. With respect to the worldwide involvement of new countries and organizations in the INSARAG network, we need to enhance ownership and participation of interested countries in the INSARAG process. To do so, we feel that we should:

- a) Formalise a number of procedures to ensure maximal involvement of all members and all members countries.
- b) Carry out on a regular basis joint exercises and training in the regions
- c) Clearly delineate and empower the regional groups so that regional cooperation and capacities are built up more systematically and so as to enable cross-fertilization between regions
- d) Create a convention for the deployment and utilization of international SAR teams, as recommended by the UN Secretary General in his report to ECOSOC, in the context of which I am very pleased to inform you that the Swiss Government is taking the lead.

I should like to request you to consider these suggestions over the next two days so that we can discuss them formally on the last day. During this meeting we shall touch on a wide range of issues, all of which are linked to our common aim to strengthen international disaster response and INSARAG.

M. Le Ministre, Distinguished hosts, dear colleagues, the success of this meeting will depend upon the efforts and inputs of each one of the participants. I am sure your collective experience, skills and knowledge will lead us towards improving our future response to the disasters that we may be sure will strike our populations again.

Ensemble, nous allons analyser nos interventions dans le contexte de catastrophes récentes, ainsi qu'évaluer conjointement nos capacités respectives, afin d'arriver à des conclusions conjointes-qui sait, peut être même une "déclaration de Hammamet" - qui nous permettra, de par une collaboration améliorée, d'arriver à des résultats encore plus performants.

Si vous me le permettez, j'aimerais ajouter quelques mots au sujet de notre rôle à nous, le Bureau de la Coordination des Affaires Humanitaires, dans le contexte de l'intervention

en cas de catastrophe: Quand une Catastrophe se produit, aucune assistance est aussi efficace que celle fournie localement - et les résolutions de l'Assemblée Générale de l'ONU nous rappellent constamment la responsabilité première, dans ce sens, des gouvernements concernés. Toutefois, et aussi bien préparés et équipés soient-ils, il y a des situations où les capacités locales, nationales, ne peuvent faire face à la totalité des besoins et où une assistance internationale s'avère requise, voire essentielle. Dans ce cas, l'aide apportée se doit d'être adaptée aux besoins des victimes, elle se veut rapide, elle se veut professionnelle et elle ne vient pas alourdir la tâche déjà des plus difficiles des intervenants nationaux. Le Bureau de la Coopération des Affaires Humanitaires a le mandat, et la responsabilité, de mobiliser l'assistance internationale quand celle-ci est nécessaire et requise. Et c'est pour cette raison que nous soutenons, que nous maintenons, que nous constituons le secrétariat de partenariats tel que l'INSARAG. Ce réseau, dont nous allons revoir l'historique et les objectifs au cours de nos discussions, est une plate-forme essentielle dans l'optique de la tâche qui nous est confiée par les Etats Membres qui nous ont créé. Nous voulons donc voir ce réseau grandir et s'amplifier et je vous prie de vous associer pleinement à cet effort durant ces jours que nous allons passer ensemble, ici à Hammamet.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

**Republic of Tunisia
Ministry of the Interior
The Cabinet**

**Address by the Minister of the Interior at the opening of the
5th Regional Conference of INSARAG
(Group Africa/Europe)**

HAMMAMET - 16 November 2000

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you at the opening of this conference which Tunisia of the New Era has privilege in hosting.

It is a great honor, indeed, since it is the first Arab and African country in which INSARAG holds one of its meetings.

On this occasion, I am pleased to convey to you the greeting of His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his encouragement to all the participants, as well as his regards to the senior officials of the UNO, for having chosen our country as a venue for this major international event. It is an event that His Excellency appreciates greatly as an opportunity to deepen thought and exchange views and approaches so as to develop international cooperation and consecrate the values of solidarity and volunteer spirit and seek out the appropriate ways of coordinating assistance and rescue in case of disasters, God forbid.

I would also like to welcome at the opening of this conference the officials in charge of the UN-OCHA and the representatives of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe who endeavor to achieve the objectives set by the UNO in this field. I equally salute the Secretary General of the ICDO and the representatives of friendly and sister countries, as well as of the governmental and non governmental organizations and associations who have kindly accepted to attend this meeting in great numbers.

I also seize this occasion to express my best regards and warmest thanks to the Swiss Government for their unfailing support to ONPC (National Office for Civil Protection) towards organizing this conference and providing for its success.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In recent years, our planet has increasingly experienced a large number of disasters, catastrophes and accidents which are no longer exclusively caused by sudden

weather changes, earthquakes, fires or floods, but are also due to human action such as industrial hazards resulting from energy distribution and communication networks, and the transport and use of fuels and chemical and radioactive substances. You have actually chosen to focus during this meeting, in such disasters, which translates the importance of the risks attendant upon them and their impact on both human beings and economies and which often tend to affect more seriously developing countries.

Apart from the losses in human lives, these disasters cause significant economic damage which most of the affected countries, especially developing ones, cannot bear and whose impacts they cannot overcome, which adversely affects their economic and social development process.

Accordingly, the coming period requires, to our mind, further joint efforts on the national, regional and international levels, with a view to enhancing the potential available for an exchange of expertise and experiences between states, organizations, and civil protection bodies, and further activating cooperation and coordination between them in the field of prevention, first, and then in the operations of search and rescue in case of disasters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tunisia prides itself on the fact that His Excellency president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has constantly endeavored to foresee developments and to lay down plans and provisions to address them in a timely manner. Among the achievements made in this regard is the initiative taken in 1991 to issue a special law related to avoiding disasters and dealing with them and organizing the rescue and assistance operations.

According to this law, a national plan and regional plans have been laid down for emergency intervention to address all aspects of disasters and accidents.

This law has also provided for the set up of a standing national committee in charge of preparing these plans, and updating and monitoring them. In this context, O.N.P.C. (National Office for Civil Protection) endeavors to include these plans and the necessary maps and action plans within a modern computer network intended to keep up with the development witnessed by the country in all fields.

In order to assess the efficiency of the various intervention plans laid down, our country regularly organizes Demonstration Exercises, the latest of which was the one that took place off the shore of the Gulf of Tunis on 20 and 23 September 2000, and which was a good opportunity for the various parties involved to gather training in handling some dangerous environmental disaster, such as oil spills (in the sea).

It was also an occasion to carry out a field assessment of the efficiency of the material and human means of intervention and to undertake better coordination between the national bodies involved, as well as to further consolidate cooperation between the Mediterranean countries with a large experience in handling such disasters.

Convinced of the important role of Civil Society in supporting assistance and rescue operations, our country has spared no effort to boost the activities of the associative tissue and encourage private initiatives, good will and all capacities which consecrate the values of self-reliance, solidarity, the volunteer spirit and the service of the national community-

These choices have contributed considerably both in reinforcing the effort of the administration and in the prevention of accidents and disasters such a forest fires and floods, as well as in strengthening the solidarity and cooperation bonds between the citizens.

Our country has also endeavored to disseminate the culture of prevention and the volunteer spirit through the involvement of many economic, social and educational bodies and institutions in conveying the message assigned to civil protection. Our country has particularly focused on disseminating this concept of prevention in schools, considering the importance of reliance on the future generations in assimilating the principles of prevention and diffusing the culture of rescue action for the benefit of victims of disasters.

This awareness - raising effort complements the sustained action to provide all safety means for the economic establishments and ensure wide participation on the part of their employees. In most of these establishments, Tunisia now has set up intervention teams comprising both personnel and senior staff members with appreciable level of training.

We believe that this national effort needs to be complemented by the contributions of regional and international cooperation (in the fields of training).

We highly appreciate in this regard the achievements made by many countries in the world in the field of training human resources specialized in rescue and assistance and reinforcement of volunteer and preventive action, a well as finding in joint work the ideal space for an exchange of information expertise and experiences and for activating the mechanisms of cooperation in the field of training.

We believe that the European countries have made considerable progress in matter of forecasting of disasters and taking of preventive action before their occurrence. This offers our African countries a sound platform for extending the basis of joint work and fruitful cooperation between the members of this Regional Group Africa/Europe such as to strengthen the ties of solidarity between the countries of the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean.

Experience shows the existence of sound habits, which have contributed in developing the sector of rescue and assistance, and providing the necessary material and equipment for intervention in various parts of the world.

We should not forget to value the noble and grand role played by humanitarian organizations, both governmental and non governmental, in the field of rescue and assistance, this is the approach that we need to persevere in developing by encouraging the involvement of all capacities, bodies and public and private institutions in the management of humanitarian action with a view to consolidating the efforts made by countries in the field of safety and protection.

We hope that your Conference will come to efficient and practical proposals and recommendations in this regard, as well as with respect to seeking out monitoring mechanisms to achieve our common aspirations. The very fact of holding this conference is, to our mind, one way of enhancing collective awareness of our responsibilities in protecting the international community against all hazards and ensuring its security and safety throughout the world.

I finally wish you success in your proceedings and a pleasant stay in Tunisia.

Thank you

**Fifth Meeting of the Regional Group Africa/Europe
International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)
in Tunisia, from 16 to 19 November 2000**

Revised Agenda

Wednesday, 15 November

- Arrival and reception of participants

21:00 Welcome reception

Thursday, 16 November 2000

09:00 Opening ceremony by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Republic of Tunisia, opening remarks by Mr. Dietrich Laepke, THW, Germany, Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group Africa/Europe, and Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Chief DRB and Deputy Director, OCHA-Geneva

10:30 Presentation: The International Emergency Response System and INSARAG's role in it (OCHA)

11:30 Briefing on the meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group Asia/Pacific, Seoul, 3-5 November 2000

11:45 Case study: the Izmit refinery fire in the Turkey earthquake of August 1999 (Turkey)

12:00 Presentation: Mozambique floods of February 2000 (Mozambique)

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Presentation: Chemical risk prevention (US)

15:00 Presentation: Global fire monitoring (Mr. Goldammer)

16:15 Presentation: Seismic risks to petrochemical installations (Germany)

17:15 Presentations: Forest fires (Ethiopia)

18:00 End of plenary session

19:30 Host dinner by Tunisian Government

Friday, 17 November 2000

08:00-12:00 Sessions of the working groups (round robin à 30 minutes)

Group A: UNEP and OCHA (Mr. V. Sakharov, OCHA)

Group B: United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), On Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) (OCHA, Mr. A. Katoch)

Group C: INSARAG Guidelines (Mr. J. Bishop)

Group D: Virtual OSOCC, Satellite Images (OCHA, Mr. T. Peter)

Group E: Video Conferencing (Mr. C. Höllein)

Group X: Fire fighting: global fire monitoring (Mr. Goldammer)

12:00-16:00 Demonstration: exercise of the Tunisian Civil Protection at 'Néfidha' (lunch at the exercise site)

16:00-18:15 Working Groups continued

19:00 Dinner

Saturday, 18 November 2000

09:00 Presentation on the INSARAG Convention

10:00 Next Steps

12:00 Closing ceremony

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Travel to El-Kantaoui

Sunday, 19 November 2000

Return travel of participants

**International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)
Meeting of the Regional Group for Africa/Europe, Tunisia
15 – 19 November 2000**

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