



## External Review of Swiss Rescue

### Management Response

The present Management Response states the position of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Department of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC/HA) on the recommendations formulated by the external review of Swiss Rescue.

### Introduction

In December 2018, SDC/HA launched a process on the future of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA). The overall goal of the process is to strengthen the SHA as the operational arm of SDC/HA taking into account the changing humanitarian environment. In order to pursue this goal, SDC/HA defined a series of short and long-term measures. With regard to the rapid response instruments, one measure decided by SDC/HA was to commission an external review of Swiss Rescue, the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) arm of SHA.

The main objective of the external review is to determine the relevance and added-value of Swiss Rescue's contribution to a) SDC/HA's core mandate "save lives and alleviate suffering"; b) Switzerland's engagement in USAR capacity building and c) Switzerland's multilateral engagement at the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).

Following an invitation procedure, a total number of eight bids to conduct the external review have been submitted to SDC/HA. After a thorough assessment of the bids, the firm Ternström Consulting, based in Sweden, was awarded the review mandate.

The evaluation team applied a mixed methods approach for data collection, combining document review with key informant interviews (individual and group). A total of 49 persons from Switzerland, Mexico, Malaysia and Sweden were interviewed.

The present management response is submitted to the SDC/HA Management for approval. It outlines the position of SDC/HA with respect to the review's recommendations and sets concrete measures and actions to be taken, including the attribution of responsibilities and the time horizon for implementation.

### Assessment of the evaluation

The report provides a sound analysis on the international patterns and trends in USAR and on Swiss Rescue's relevance and added-value. On this basis, the report draws conclusions, formulates clear recommendations and therefore constitutes a solid basis for the SDC/HA Management to decide on the future of Swiss Rescue.

The SDC/HA Management thanks the review team for its efforts and the valuable report.

### Main findings

The main findings and conclusions of the review can be summarized as follows:

- Swiss Rescue classified as Heavy USAR team has not contributed significantly to the core mandate of SDC/HA in the past two decades. The review team further

concludes that this capacity is unlikely to save lives or alleviate suffering in the future.

- Specialized modules or staff deployed in the frame of multi-sectoral Rapid Response Teams, i.e. smaller teams of specialists such as coordination specialists and structural engineers, have been successfully deployed in other interventions. Such deployments have been relevant and added value in relation to the core mandate.
- Swiss Rescue's contribution to USAR capacity building is relevant and does add value to emergency management structures in host countries. Swiss investments in USAR capacity building have contributed to the massive increase in global USAR capacity that has taken place.
- INSARAG has been instrumental in establishing a multilateral USAR classification system. Over time, Switzerland's commitment to the USAR instrument has been decisive for the conceptualisation, global acceptance and the institutionalisation through INSARAG. Should Switzerland decide to phase out, there are other stakeholders willing and able to take the lead in INSARAG

### Recommendations and key elements of the Management Response

Based on the above mentioned findings and conclusions, the report formulates six recommendations. Out of these six recommendations, the SDC/HA Management qualifies 2 as 'fully agreed' (green), 3 as 'partially agreed' (orange) and 1 as 'disagreed' (red). The recommendations and the respective position of SDC/HA Management can be summarized as follows:

1. SDC/HA should no longer maintain a classified USAR capacity.	Disagree
2. SDC/HA should invest in informing the public and political stakeholders about why USAR is being phased out.	Partially agree
3. SDC/HA should use the resources freed up by ceasing to maintain a heavy USAR capacity to systematically build more flexibility and adaptiveness into its response capacities.	Partially agree
4. SDC/HA should systematically invest in developing pre-disaster relationships with regional and national emergency response mechanisms.	Fully agree
5. SDC/HA should maintain and expand its investment in capacity building of partner country emergency management authorities with a focus on DRR and disaster response management.	Fully agree
6. Switzerland should step down from the role of global chair of INSARAG and phase out its support for the institution.	Partially agree
<div>Fully agree</div> <div>Partially agree</div> <div>Disagree</div>	

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## Annex: Overview of recommendations, management response and measures

<b>Recommendation 1</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDC/HA should no longer maintain a classified Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capacity. In consequence, the INSARAG reclassification of Swiss Rescue "INSIEME", planned for 2020, now postponed until 2021, should be cancelled.</li> </ul>		
<b>Management response</b>		
Fully agree	Partially agree	<b>Disagree</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earthquakes are among the deadliest natural hazards and strike without warning. Due to the global tendency of increasing urbanisation, the demand for USAR capacities at international level is expected to remain in the near future, in addition to the existing local and national response capacities of the affected countries.</li> <li>Against this background, the management of SDC/HA decides that it is necessary to maintain its USAR capacities for earthquake response according to international standards and consequently to maintain Swiss Rescue as an INSARAG classified Heavy USAR Team. Swiss Rescue will continue to be deployed as long as the criteria of needs and added value are met after the occurrence of an earthquake. As a consequence, the INSARAG reclassification of Swiss Rescue is to be carried out in 2021.</li> <li>Only as an INSARAG classified USAR Team, Swiss Rescue remains qualified to respond according to the international standards after an earthquake, in coordination with the corresponding local emergency management agencies and other international USAR teams.</li> <li>In addition, the classification of Swiss Rescue as a Heavy USAR Team constitutes the basis for Switzerland's credibility in international Preparedness/USAR capacity building (see Recommendation 5) and for the development of a modular approach, combining Swiss Rescue with multisectoral Rapid Response Teams (see Recommendation 3). In the past, deployments of Swiss Rescue had also been "door openers" for mid- / longer term engagements of SDC/HA in DRR / Preparedness.</li> <li>As founding member and long-standing chair of INSARAG and due to Switzerland's long and successful engagement in establishing a multilateral USAR external classification system, it is in the interest of SDC/HA to assure that INSARAG remains a credible multilateral actor in USAR. Having no longer a classified USAR team according to INSARAG standards would jeopardize Switzerland's credibility in supporting a multilateral USAR classification and coordination system. In addition, it would send a negative signal to domestic partners and the international community on the relevance of INSARAG and UN OCHA.</li> </ul>		
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare the reclassification of Swiss Rescue planned in November 2021</li> </ul>	Team Rapid Response	Q1 – Q3 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to assure the operational readiness of Swiss Rescue (maintenance of the material, trainings, exercises, etc.)</li> </ul>	Team Rapid Response, H-Log, H-R/Feld	ongoing
<b>Recommendation 2</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDC/HA should, given the role that USAR deployments have played historically, invest in informing the public and political stakeholders about why USAR is being phased out in favour of other effective, needs-based, humanitarian response.</li> </ul>		



Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since SDC/HA has decided to continue to be engaged in earthquake response with its own USAR capacities and to maintain Swiss Rescue as an INSARAG classified Heavy USAR Team, informing the various stakeholders about why USAR is being phased out is irrelevant.</li> <li>• Communication remains however key in general. As a consequence, SDC/HA will assure an adequate and active communication to the Swiss Rescue partner organisations, SDC/HA staff and the hierarchy of the FDFA on the future developments of Swiss Rescue as a modular and flexible instrument as part of an overall rapid response mechanism.</li> </ul>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively communicate on the future development of Swiss Rescue to the Swiss Rescue partner organisations, SDC/HA staff and the hierarchy of the FDFA.</li> </ul>	SDC/HA Staff Unit	Q3 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assure public access by publishing the review report and the management response on the FDFA website.</li> </ul>	SDC/HA Staff Unit	Q3 2021

Recommendation 3		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SDC/HA should use the resources freed up by ceasing to maintain a heavy USAR capacity to systematically build more flexibility and adaptiveness into its response capacities. An orderly adaptation of SDC/HA strategies, external relationships, capacities and staffing pattern should be undertaken. The ToR mention that a separate evaluation of the other rapid response instruments is underway. This should, if feasible, suggest alternative use of such resources.</li> </ul>		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swiss Rescue classified as heavy USAR team will not be abandoned. However, the Management of SDC/HA has decided to follow up on the call for more flexibility and adaptive capacity by examining options for a modular combination of Swiss Rescue structure with multisectoral Rapid Response Teams (so-called SETs / or: RRTs), also in emergencies other than earthquake and beyond the rubble.</li> <li>• In the future, the deployment of Swiss Rescue, or parts of it, in combination with elements of a SET should consistently be considered as an alternative to the mobilization of the whole Swiss Rescue depending on context and needs.</li> <li>• This modular approach constitutes an adequate response to the changing humanitarian environment and more complex needs. Specialized modules shall be developed, allowing a contextually adaptive and flexible emergency response after natural and manmade disasters. In doing so, SDC/HA can build upon existing and successfully deployed modules. Examples from recent disasters: after the earthquakes in Mexico (September 2017), Albania (November 2019) and the harbour explosion in Beirut (August 2020), structural engineers and onsite advisers were for instance jointly deployed with a SET to support the local emergency agencies in structural damage assessment.</li> </ul>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a set of modules (mini, midi, maxi) combining the assets of Swiss Rescue with relevant elements of</li> </ul>	Lead: Team Rapid Response (Desk Swiss Rescue and Desk SET)	Q3/4 2021

a SET into adaptive and sustainable response instruments	Associates: H-Log, H-R/Feld	
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#### Recommendation 4

- SDC/HA should systematically invest in developing pre-disaster relationships with regional and national emergency response mechanisms, in order to improve the likelihood that SHA rapid response instruments actually do get deployed.

#### Management response

##### Fully agree

##### Partially agree

##### Disagree

- INSARAG, with its more than 90 member states and Switzerland as the current Global Chair, is a unique platform for coordination of partnership in preparedness and response.
- Rapid response actions are always a race against time. It is therefore essential that the authorities of countries most exposed to natural disasters are aware of what Switzerland can offer. Our experience has shown that awareness raising measures and above all maintaining a network of contacts with the responsible local disaster management authorities must be carried out before the crisis occurs (pre-disaster relationships).
- Establishing formal disaster response agreements is one way to intensify pre-disaster relationships with disaster prone countries. Switzerland has concluded a series of such agreements, most recently with China, Indonesia, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Center) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). The cooperation with these partners goes beyond the formalization of these agreements, through regular dialogue and capacity support, most notably in the context of disaster risk reduction and crisis response preparedness. The existence of this network has proven invaluable for allowing effective emergency support such as after the Sulawesi earthquake or the hurricanes in the Caribbean and Central America.
- In addition, SDC/HA has elaborated a catalogue on the Swiss tool box of emergency assistance. This catalogue was sent to the Swiss representations abroad requesting them to enter into contact with the respective national disaster management authorities and explain Switzerland's support tool box prior to a possible next humanitarian crisis.
- Capacity building in DRR and in particular regarding disaster preparedness (see recommendation 5) is seen as an investment to strengthen pre-disaster relationships.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
• Continue to elaborate disaster relief agreements with selected countries and national or regional emergency management authorities based on a mapping of existing agreements and identified gaps	Geographic divisions	ongoing
• Renew existing but outdated disaster relief agreements	Geographic divisions	ongoing
• Maintain intensive relationship with these authorities through SDC Cooperation Offices and DRR/RR Hubs located in selected Swiss Embassies	Geographic divisions	ongoing
• Raise awareness on the Rapid Response instruments within SDC and the FDFA as well as offer trainings to the Swiss representations abroad	Team Rapid Response	ongoing

<b>Recommendation 5</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDC/HA should maintain and expand its investment in capacity building of partner country emergency management authorities with a focus on DRR and disaster response management rather than USAR. Prior to the expansion a multiyear strategy - building on host country needs and Swiss comparative advantage - should be developed. This work should be done in close collaboration with other SDC departments and the embassies of the Confederation abroad.</li> </ul>		
<b>Management response</b>		
<b>Fully agree</b>	Partially agree	Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDC/HA will continue its Preparedness/USAR capacity building projects and extend its engagement to other thematic fields, such as crisis management and coordination, beyond earthquake response (to date: Mongolia, Tunisia, Central America, Peru).</li> <li>Furthermore, SDC/HA will continue to organize international simulation exercises such as SIMEX and engage in INSARAG classification regime (IEC/R) as classifiers and mentors (to date: Armenia, Belarus and Turkey).</li> <li>The Dispatch on International Cooperation for 2021-24 provides a mandate to pursue a multi-year DRR program, including Preparedness/USAR capacity building and support to disaster preparedness. In doing so, SDC/HA will also seek synergies with other domains of SDC so as to seize nexus opportunities.</li> </ul>		
<b>Measures</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renew the multi-year operational concept on USAR capacity building and expand it beyond USAR aiming at sharpening Switzerland's profile on the basis of the following criteria: a) needs b) Switzerland's added value and c) Switzerland's foreign policy interests.</li> </ul>	Team Rapid Response	Q3/4 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain an adequate volume of DRR projects in the HA portfolio, including disaster preparedness</li> </ul>	Geographic and Multilateral divisions	ongoing

<b>Recommendation 6</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Without a classified USAR capacity, Switzerland can no longer be actively involved in the development of INSARAG and should, in consequence, step down from the role of global chair and phase out its support for the institution over an agreed time period allowing for an orderly exit.</li> </ul>		
<b>Management response</b>		
<b>Fully agree</b>	<b>Partially agree</b>	Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As founding member of INSARAG and the current global chair, Switzerland has had and continues to have a profound influence on INSARAG. Switzerland's support has significantly contributed to the establishment of an institution that has successfully developed internationally accepted minimal standards for earthquake preparedness and response as well as a global wide classification and coordination system.</li> <li>Today, INSARAG is an established institution hosted by OCHA and has achieved the adoption of a UN General Assembly Resolution, GA57/150, "Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International USAR Assistance".</li> <li>After 30 years of Swiss Chairmanship, Switzerland is convinced that it is time for a new host of the INSARAG global chair that has the acceptance of the INSARAG network. Switzerland will therefore seek a solution together with the INSARAG Secretariat and announce at the INSARAG Global meeting in October 2021 in Warsaw that it will step down from the role of global chair.</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Switzerland will however remain a member of INSARAG. As such, it will engage in the INSARAG Steering Group on the strategic level, participate in selected working groups and share its USAR and capacity building experience on the technical level.</li> </ul>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss the Swiss withdrawal from the Global Chairmanship with the INSARAG Secretariat</li> </ul>	Head of Humanitarian Aid	Q3 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce Switzerland's withdrawal from the role as global chair at the INSARAG Global meeting in October 2021 in Warsaw</li> </ul>	Head of Humanitarian Aid	Oct 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get actively involved in the search for a new global chair</li> </ul>	Head of Humanitarian Aid	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better link the Swiss INSARAG agenda with operational programmes of SDC (e.g. capacity building)</li> </ul>	Rapid response, Geographic and Multilateral divisions	ongoing