

We the Peoples|

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We the Peoples – Global Leadership Awards 2024

New York City

November 21, 2024

Honorable members of the United Nations and distinguished guests:

It is both an honor and a privilege to represent the brave individuals of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group as we accept the 2024 UN Heroes Award. This recognition is not just for INSARAG — it is for the countless frontline workers, volunteers, and heroes who risk their lives to save others in the aftermath of disaster.

Since our founding in 1991, following devastating earthquakes in Mexico and Armenia, INSARAG has worked to ensure that search-and-rescue teams collaborate more effectively to save lives and reduce suffering.

In 2015, I was participating in a simulated earthquake response in the United States when a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in Nepal. My team, along with over one hundred international search-and-rescue and emergency medical teams, responded and worked together, day and night, through aftershocks and chaos, to find, rescue, and provide treatment to those in need.

Five days after the initial earthquake, I was part of an international effort that rescued a teenage boy trapped in a collapsed building. Words cannot adequately describe the emotions I felt watching him thank his rescuers. His survival, against all odds, is a powerful testament to our shared mission: when nations and individuals unite, even in the darkest of times, hope, courage, and determination can light the way.

On behalf of INSARAG, I extend our deepest gratitude to the United Nations, and to all those who contribute to this shared mission. Together, we embody the belief that compassion can turn despair into hope.

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