ANNEX 9
THE MANAGEMENT OF DEAD FOREIGN NATIONALS FOLLOWING A LARGE MASS FATALITY DISASTER

Visitors, or residents who are citizens of other countries, will have families who are desperate for news of their fate. As stated in the Interpol General Assembly resolution AGN/65/RES/13, “human beings have the right not to lose their identities after death”. Obtaining news of a relative’s death and receiving the body are equally important for local families and international ones. It is therefore reasonable in a multi-fatality disaster for the overall process of managing the dead to include arrangements that will apply to the bodies of overseas nationals after identification.

This is a principle which is easy to articulate, but difficult to implement. Ultimately, the issue of discovering which bodies are those of overseas nationals is best resolved by identifying all persons who died in the disaster. It is sometimes thought that a process prior to identification to separate those who are thought to be foreign nationals from those who are local can be undertaken. This usually cannot be done reliably. If this is understood, early response to the disaster will be simplified and will avoid discrimination.

Pressure to prioritize the finding of foreign nationals must not be allowed to distort the priorities of a systematic local approach to identifying all the dead. It would not normally be appropriate, for example, for a team from another country to be present in the field simply to deal with bodies thought to be from their country. Such assistance should be available for the overall management of the dead. On this basis, and in the event that nationals from a foreign country are discovered, it may be reasonable, subject to the direction of those responsible locally, for a team from that country to become involved in their management.

In relation to the Mass Fatality Plan dealing with overall management of the dead, a step should be included which outlines the procedures to be followed if a dead body is discovered to be that of an overseas national. These procedures should be established in advance and may involve Interpol and the diplomatic corps/foreign embassies.