



CONCEPT NOTE

“The Central Emergency Response Fund: A fund for all by all”

High-Level Event in the Margins of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Wednesday 26th September 2018, 1:00-2:30, Conference Room 1

Background

Established in 2006, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has facilitated over US\$5.3 billion worth of life-saving assistance to 101 countries and territories. CERF delivers funding quickly to humanitarian responders and brings greater balance to emergency assistance through its rapid response and underfunded emergencies windows. Since CERF was established, the global humanitarian requirements coordinated by the UN have quadrupled – from US\$5.2 billion to assist 32 million people to \$22.5 billion to support over 90 million people in need in 2018. Recognizing the increased needs and CERF’s earned position in the humanitarian ecosystem as one of the most effective financing tools to provide time-critical UN-led life-saving humanitarian assistance, the General Assembly in 2016 endorsed the Secretary-General’s call to more than double CERF’s annual funding target to \$1 billion. This endorsement reflects Member States’ confidence in CERF that has received contributions from 126 Member States, including from 48 that have also benefited from CERF funding. A strong CERF relies on Member States’ commitment to deliver on its mandate, to leave no one behind, and to reach the most vulnerable first.

Against this background, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) will organize a high-level event with the governments of Chad, Germany, Mauritania, Norway, Somalia, Sweden and UAE aimed at mobilizing increased global leadership to reinforce the role of CERF in responding to humanitarian crises. The event will showcase CERF’s results with a focus on CERF’s response to recent famine prevention and drought-related emergencies through early response allocations, and it will explore the potential for an expanded role for CERF in promoting anticipatory early humanitarian action.

Issues and Significance

CERF is the only global emergency fund with the speed, predictability and flexibility to reach millions of people with life-saving aid and protection wherever, whenever a crisis hits. Since its inception, CERF has been at the forefront of global efforts to respond to humanitarian crises and has proven its ability to support early humanitarian action by allocating funding quickly to address life-saving needs, sometimes within hours of the onset of an emergency. Each year on average, CERF enables humanitarian partners to deliver critical healthcare to more than 15 million people, food aid to 4 million, urgent water and sanitation to 4 million, protection to 3 million, agricultural livelihoods protection to more than 3 million and shelter to 2 million among others. A majority of people assisted are women and girls.

CERF also plays a central role in global efforts to prevent famine by responding to the humanitarian consequences of drought and other climate related shocks, as well as conflict-induced food insecurity. In 2017, as Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen were facing the threat of famine, Humanitarian Country Teams used CERF and the respective Country-Based Pooled Funds to quickly scale up humanitarian action, helping to stave off catastrophe. Most recently, CERF released \$30 million to kickstart urgent relief efforts in West Africa's Sahel region (through humanitarian programmes in Chad, Mali and Mauritania) where acute drought and insecurity have escalated food insecurity and malnutrition to crisis levels.

CERF's role as a first responder to humanitarian need will remain critical as intensifying conflicts and climate change create and exacerbate humanitarian crises. Also, there is an increasing recognition that CERF could help address a critical gap in humanitarian financing by promoting time critical action ahead of imminent shocks based on forecasts and early warning. A recent review of CERF's response to the humanitarian needs caused by the 2015-16 El Niño episode found that CERF grants were essential to the humanitarian response as it was some of the first international funding available. But it also found that CERF could have had a greater impact had it helped kick-start action even earlier before humanitarian needs fully unfolded. Given the fund's effective and transparent systems, and its global reach, a formal CERF approach promoting time-critical early action to high-risk, high-vulnerability situations has the potential to further help reduce or prevent humanitarian suffering by enabling UN and its partners to respond earlier.

Recognizing the changed humanitarian reality compared to when CERF was established in 2006, as well as the General Assembly endorsed increase of CERF's annual funding target to \$1 billion, the event will offer an opportunity for Member States to explore current challenges in financing of humanitarian action and discuss CERF's potential role in addressing these. A particular focus will be the potential to improve CERF's life-saving impact through more systematic anticipatory funding, aimed at enabling the humanitarian system to respond earlier and more effectively to predictable shocks, including slow onset drought and famine risk situations. The event will also allow Member States to reconfirm their commitment to CERF and its new funding target.

Outcome, format and envisioned programme

In the year where CERF's annual funding target is officially increased to \$1 billion, this event will be a milestone in the lead up to the CERF High-Level Pledging Conference in December 2018 and aim to:

- Acknowledge and showcase CERF's unique added value in responses to humanitarian crises, including drought and famine related emergencies;
- Mobilize increased political and financial support to CERF from Member States;
- Advance the discussion on more systematic early action allocations from CERF.

Specific expected outcomes include:

- Reinforced commitment by Member States to CERF as a 'fund for all, by all';
- Reinforced CERF mandate as the UN's global emergency fund critical to the humanitarian community's ability to deliver timely, coordinated and principled lifesaving assistance on the ground as part of the global commitment to leave no one behind;
- Broad Member State support to explore more systematic anticipatory financing by CERF in support of early action (given availability of increased funding);
- Member State encouragement to promote and expand global support to CERF in view of the 2018 High-level pledging conference, as well as a broadened CERF donor base.

The event will involve a high-level panel chaired by the Secretary-General, with participation of Ministerial level representatives. The key components of the event include:

- Opening remarks by the Secretary-General
- Moderated by Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mr. Mark Lowcock
- Speeches by panellists at Ministerial level from:
 - H.E. Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany,
 - H.E. Mr. Ahmed Isse Awad, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Somalia,
 - H.E. Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden,
 - H.E. Mr. Issa Doubragne, Minister of Economy and Development Planning of Chad
 - H.E. Mr Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
 - H.E. Mr. Nikolai Astrup, Minister of International Development of Norway,
 - H.E. Mrs. Reem Ebrahim Al-Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates,
- Videos interspersed with panel remarks on CERF recently filmed (Chad and global footage)
- Interventions from the floor are encouraged. The event will be webcast.