2015 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

The future of humanitarian affairs: the evolving role of CERF

OCHA / CERF secretariat
12.30-14.30, 18 June 2015
Room XXIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year’s theme: The future of humanitarian affairs: towards greater inclusiveness, coordination, interoperability and effectiveness.

Background

Over the past decade, the humanitarian landscape has undergone significant changes. Humanitarian needs have increased more than three times, while the available resources for response have been growing at a slower pace. A number of natural disasters required responses at large scale; and many complex emergencies have not only put a disproportionate burden on the system, but have also become protracted. Securing sufficient, timely and predictable resources for effective humanitarian action – covering both large and small emergencies - has become increasingly challenging. At the same time, the discussions on global commitments to the sustainable development agenda, the World Humanitarian Summit process and emphasis on humanitarian financing present an opportunity to strengthen effective humanitarian response.

Since its establishment in 2006, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has provided the humanitarian community with timely and reliable funding to kick-start operations in sudden onset crises and to sustain life-saving action in crises that have been unable to attract sufficient resources. The Fund is well-established and commended by both funding recipients and donors, who consider it well-managed, efficient and accountable. Surpassing US$450 million in contributions three times in the last four years has been an indicator of CERF’s credibility.

Almost 10 years after the start of its operations, it is timely to assess how CERF of today fits the needs of humanitarian response of tomorrow. How can CERF maintain or enhance its strengths and further capitalize on its comparative advantages? Does CERF need to adjust its scope and focus? Do we need a bigger CERF? These are just some of the questions also raised by the recently concluded scoping studies on the future of CERF.

Discussion points

Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following question:

- How do changes in humanitarian landscape affect the future of CERF?
- What is the comparative advantage of CERF and how can the Fund remain an effective mechanism for the future?
• How do we ensure a well-resourced CERF for the years to come?

**Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations**

The panel discussion is part of the follow-up consultation after the conclusion of scoping studies on the future of CERF.

**Format**

A panel discussion with an interactive dialogue.

**Chairperson:**

• *Stephen O’Brien, Emergency Relief Coordinator*

**Panel composition**

• *Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General, IFRC*
• *Carsten Staur, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations in Geneva*
• *Robert Piper, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel*
• *Barbara Noseworthy, Assistant Executive Director a.i., Partnership, Governance and Advocacy Department, World Food Programme*
• *Barnaby Willitts-King, author of the CERF for the Future study*
• *Robert Filipp, President, Innovative Finance Foundation*

**Background Material**

• *A CERF for the Future: Summary Paper of CERF Scoping Studies* [link]
• *Study on the Added Value of a Reformed CERF (Barnaby Willitts-King, 2015)* [link]
• *Future Humanitarian Financing: Looking beyond the Crisis (2015)* [link]
• *CERF 2014 Annual Report*

**Contact**

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