

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief

Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien

**Welcome and opening remarks at high-level event marking the 11th anniversary of
the Central Emergency Response Fund**

New York, 13 December 2016

As delivered

Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon,
Excellencies,
Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the 11th High-Level Pledging Conference for the Central Emergency Response Fund or CERF.

This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the landmark resolution 46/182, which has played a vital role in strengthening our ability to deliver effective and efficient humanitarian response to those most in need. This very resolution has also laid the foundation of what we now know as CERF.

Since 2006, CERF has built a solid track record for the speed and impact of its responses. It has enabled frontline UN agencies to provide urgent life-saving aid to hundreds of millions of people - anytime and anywhere crises strike. It's a fund by all for all. It's the ultimate show of solidarity by Member States.

Every year, on average, we can count on CERF to deliver critical health care to 20 million people, and 10 million people to receive food assistance. Because of CERF, about 8 million people also have access to water and sanitation and 5 million people receive livelihood support. The Fund also supports other vital services such as, protection, shelter, emergency education and camp management.

Earlier this year, the humanitarian community committed to improve the transparency, efficiency, flexibility of aid and provide more means of assistance to local and national responders in support of the Grand Bargain. CERF is already very much in line with these efforts. It is flexible and un-earmarked. CERF enables UN agencies and their partners on the ground to implement collective and strategic humanitarian action, while enhancing leadership and coordination. As a global pooled fund, CERF offers strong

value-for-money for its donors, a force-multiplier for its partners, but most importantly, an effective and critical lifeline for people in desperate need of urgent assistance.

Excellencies, Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen,

CERF is a success story that we all can be proud of. Thanks to your generous support in 2016, girls like Khadija who lives in a small Chadian village bordering with Sudan, no longer needs to fetch water in the ephemeral river bed, with high risk of waterborne diseases. Women like Om Rad in Homs, Syria received maternal and pre-natal health care when many hospitals were not functioning anymore, so that her baby could be born safely. Or take Abu Yousef, a father of six living in Jordan after fleeing across the border from Syria. CERF funds made it possible for him to receive child cash grants that helped get food for his children when he arrived in Jordan with nothing. Families hit by severe drought and poor harvests in Zimbabwe received cash assistance. Thousands of people displaced in hard-to-reach areas in the Upper Nile region of South Sudan benefitted from survival kits containing emergency shelter, health and nutrition supplies, delivered via UN airdrops. The yellow fever outbreak in Angola was halted by a large and huge and timely vaccination campaign where CERF played a critical role.

These stories abound. And each one of you can claim attribution for your support. Thank you.

But while we mark the successes, we are also sobered by the challenges. Today, we are faced with unprecedented humanitarian needs since the Second World War. Last week, I launched the 2017 Global Humanitarian Overview. The United Nations and its partners are appealing for a record \$22.2 billion to meet the needs of almost 93 million people in 33 countries. This year, despite donors' generosity, at its peak just over half of the consolidated requirements were met.

Similarly, although CERF has received almost 95 per cent of its current funding target of \$450 million, there still remains a funding shortfall of \$25 million, which, in large part, is due to the negative impact of our top donors' currency fluctuations against the US dollar.

We count on your support to help CERF reach or surpass its annual target of \$450 million for 2017, and this Conference is our starting block. So never too late to make a contribution. Thank you.

As we race to address the scale and complexity of today's unprecedented humanitarian challenges, we know that CERF, as a proven successful investment tool, can do much more. That is why the Secretary-General, in his 'Agenda for Humanity' called for a \$1 billion CERF by 2018.

Excellencies, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

Our solidarity for people most in need is being tested like never before, and never has CERF been more relevant.

Over the past decade, CERF has earned your trust and commitment of its donors and partners, and it is valued as an essential cornerstone of the world's humanitarian ecosystem.

A strong and sufficiently resourced CERF that is able to deliver on its mandate, is every Member State's responsibility and a step toward attaining our commitments to leave no one behind.

A \$1 billion CERF is neither an ambition nor a convenient target. It is an absolute necessity considering the current context of unprecedented levels of humanitarian suffering and the highest level of global displacement since the Second World War.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General-Designate, in his address to the General Assembly, emphasized the need for the United Nations to be nimble, efficient and effective, and focus more on delivery and less on process. These attributes are at the very heart of CERF's core values.

CERF is fast, effective and based on needs alone. Its funding tackles the most urgent, life-saving needs at the earliest stages when they can have the greatest impact. Each year, millions of people depend on this global 'first aid' to stay alive and safe for a better chance tomorrow.

Every dollar invested in CERF is directly translated into stories of hope and survival.

Today's event marks a critical juncture for CERF. The success of its second decade depends on the foundations that we lay from this day forward.

We count on your continued support and engagement through CERF.

To begin today's programme, you will now see a film showcasing CERF in action. This will be followed by the Opening Remarks of the Secretary-General.

Thereafter we will start the panel discussion which will focus on CERF's support to displaced people and how a \$1 billion CERF will improve the delivery of aid to refugees, internally displaced people and host communities.

Following the panel debate, the floor will be opened for questions to the panelists. The panel discussion will conclude our ceremonial session, and I will then open the pledging session for your statements and, I hope, generous pledges to CERF for 2017.

I would like to note that we have interpretation in six languages until 1:00 p.m.

That's the moment to make sure everybody can hear your generosity. Now over to the film. Thank you.

