Remarks at the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment side event “Meeting Urgent Humanitarian Needs: the UN Humanitarian Pooled Funds in the Post WHS era”

Geneva, 23 June 2017

As delivered

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to this afternoon’s event on “Meeting Urgent Humanitarian Needs: the UN Humanitarian Pooled Funds in the Post WHS era”.

As you will recall, last year, at the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment in New York, I chaired a panel in which we discussed the role of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) in delivering against the ambitions of the World Humanitarian Summit.

At the Summit, donors and aid organizations agreed on a “Grand Bargain”, which is very familiar to you, to promote a more efficient, effective and accountable humanitarian financing system.

Signatories to the deal - many of whom are represented in this room today - agreed to leverage these pooled funds to accelerate the reforms we hoped to achieve through this important process.

Today, with a record 141 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, the need for us to deliver against those commitments is greater than ever.

The CERF and CBPFs have become a cornerstone of our collective humanitarian endeavour. They are reliable sources of unearmarked funding that enable flexible, very speedy and timely, life-saving assistance for those most in need.

They are strategic, efficient, cost effective, and proven - and you can rely upon them. They empower humanitarian leadership and ensure that funding is channelled to the world’s highest priority humanitarian projects for maximum impact of what is always going to be limited resources.
Pooled Funds are inclusive, and incentivize collective accountability with allocation and decision-making processes that are needs-based, fully transparent and involve all constituents - UN agencies, international and national NGOs and donors.

Last year, CERF and CBPFs together allocated US$1.1 billion to the most critical humanitarian projects in 53 countries around the world, accounting for 4.8 per cent of global humanitarian funding.

While this may seem like a relatively small proportion, the strategic value of these contributions, which zero in on the highest priority projects in Humanitarian Response Plans and other joint appeals, cannot be overstated.

In his Agenda for Humanity, the former UN Secretary-General recognized the key role of CERF and CBPFs and called on the humanitarian community to better leverage their comparative advantages - such as CERF’s global reach and rapid disbursement speed and CBPF’s direct funding for local NGOs - as a way to advance our collective commitment to “leave no one behind”.

He called for an increase in the proportion of funding channelled through CBPFs to 15 per cent of Humanitarian Response Plan requirements and for an expansion of CERF’s annual target to $1 billion, a target that was endorsed by the UN General Assembly last December.

They are not arbitrary targets. The Grand Bargain reiterated the Secretary-General’s call and it acknowledged that pooled funds with critical mass are key to our collective ability to deliver timely, coordinated and principled assistance.

Our panel this morning will examine how CERF and CBPFs have advanced Grand Bargain commitments by considering practical, recent examples from north-east Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen where more than 20 million people face or risk famine.

This year alone, $240 million in coordinated allocations from CERF and CBPFs were critical to early action and the scale-up of humanitarian responses in those countries.

When very clearly we are seeking to avert famine, and these are absolutely critical funds, by mid-June CERF was the fifth highest funding source for humanitarian action in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen combined.

Under the leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators, the Funds were used in synergy as complementary tools to support the most critical famine response and prevention activities prioritized in Humanitarian Response Plans.

In Somalia, allocations from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund and CERF - including a $22 million loan to FAO - prioritized the most immediate needs in the most affected areas. Some $55 million from CERF was used mainly to cover procurement of life-saving supplies in bulk through UN agencies while $26.8 million from the Somalia Fund...
focused on supporting the best-placed NGOs to ensure quick and efficient delivery of assistance.

In Yemen, $25 million from CERF and $11 million from the Yemen Humanitarian Fund were directed to respond to the immediate needs of malnourished people and those on the brink of famine in priority districts. The Yemen Fund focused on strengthening national and international NGO response, while CERF was used to help UN agencies scale up their interventions.

In Nigeria, $22 million in famine-related allocations from CERF in early 2017 came on top of $23 million in contributions in 2016. These funds were critical in scaling up the response in the North-East with allocations going to the provision of food and other life-saving support including protection and nutrition.

To further bolster the local response, I launched a new CBPF - the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund - in February and today I am pleased to announce the first allocation of $10 million to the Fund. Also, CERF is considering an additional allocation of a $10 million grant, bringing total CERF support thus far in 2017 to $32 million.

In South Sudan, where famine affecting more than 100,000 people was declared in February, the same day that the Secretary-General highlighted the needs in his press briefing, $16 million from CERF and $22 million from the South Sudan Fund prioritized projects in famine-affected and at-risk areas, ranging from treatment of acute malnutrition and provision of seeds and tools to school feeding. They also included education in emergency activities because schools are zones which protect children from the worst of conflict and famine.

In my two years as Emergency Relief Coordinator, I have seen the impact that the pooled funds have in helping some of the world’s most vulnerable people from Yemen to Myanmar, from the Central African Republic to Syria.

To ensure that the Funds continue to live up to their goals and to improve their positive impact, I remain, and OCHA remains, totally committed to ensuring that funding entrusted to the Funds serve those most affected by crisis in the most effective way possible.

Before I turn to our panellists, I would like to end on a note of thanks to our partners: the donors that make the Funds possible and the humanitarians who use the Funds, working tirelessly around the world and risking their own lives for the sake of others.

These are proven and totally transparently audited, bringing confidence of donors. They are absolutely vital in the speed that they bring in and best way to ensure urgent humanitarian funding. These qualities will help incentivize for additional funds to meet the new targets for both funds.

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