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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Letter dated 15 December 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 60/124, adopted on 15 December 2005, by which the Assembly established the Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group to advise me on the use and impact of the Fund. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 21 of the resolution, I hereby transmit herewith a note on the meeting of the Advisory Group, which was held in New York on 27 and 28 October 2015 (see annex).

As summarized in the note, the Advisory Group was briefed on the use and management of the Fund in 2015. While the allocations of the Fund might be small as compared with total global humanitarian needs, the contributions have a high impact because of their speed and timing, often at the immediate onset of an emergency or when situations deteriorate sharply. Allocations from the underfunded emergencies window of the Fund often trigger greater public awareness and generate additional funding from other donors to address the needs of people in protracted and chronically underfunded emergencies.

The Advisory Group discussed the current shortfall in reaching the 2015 funding target of the Fund and the potential impact on the ability of the Fund to respond to humanitarian crises during the remainder of 2015 and in early 2016. They discussed further the need to deepen and diversify the income base of the Fund and the related challenges and opportunities, including exploring innovative financing for resource mobilization efforts in that regard.

The Advisory Group acknowledged the strong performance of the Fund but agreed that additional political advocacy would improve its position relative to other funding mechanisms and reinforce the case for investment in it. The 2015 high-level pledging event to mark the 10-year anniversary of the Fund and the way forward was also considered as an opportunity to strengthen the positioning of the Fund as the United Nations global emergency response fund.



The Advisory Group received updates on policy issues, including the mid-year analysis of the 2014 resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator reports, the finalization of a policy for communication in any case of fraudulent use of Central Emergency Response Fund funds and the preliminary findings from the independent review of the added value of the Fund in the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

I would be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of Member States and observer missions.

(Signed) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex**Note on the meeting of the Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group (27 and 28 October 2015)****Summary**

1. The Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/124 to advise the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, on the use and impact of the Fund. The Group's second meeting of 2015 was held in New York on 27 and 28 October and was chaired by Manuel Bessler (Switzerland).

2. The Advisory Group welcomed seven new members: Ashraf Shikhaliyev (Azerbaijan), Christina F. Buchan (Canada), Choi Seokyoung (Republic of Korea), Judy Cheng-Hopkins (Malaysia), Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko (South Africa), Najla Alkaabi (United Arab Emirates) and Rachel Turner (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

3. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, briefed the Advisory Group on the use and management of the Fund from 1 January through mid-October 2015. He provided the Advisory Group members with an overview of Fund operations in 2015. Until mid-October 2015, the Fund had allocated nearly \$384 million to humanitarian partners for life-saving assistance in 39 countries. He informed the Group that, although that amount was relatively small as compared with total global needs, contributions to the Fund had a high impact owing to their speed and timing, often at the onset of an emergency or when situations deteriorated sharply, while at the same time strengthening United Nations coordination on the ground. He also highlighted the underfunded emergencies window of the Fund that supports the needs of people in protracted and chronically underfunded emergencies. When the Fund was focused on one of those emergencies, it often triggered greater public awareness and generated additional funding from other donors. He informed the Advisory Group that the Fund was experiencing a funding shortfall in 2015 owing to the currency exchange fluctuations linked to the strong United States dollar in relation to the currencies of its top donors and a decrease in pledges by a few donors. He warned the Group that a funding shortfall would compromise the ability of the Fund to respond to emergencies, in particular as humanitarian needs continued to grow.

4. The Advisory Group was also briefed on progress made in the preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in May 2016 in Istanbul, and for the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing. The Group discussed the current shortfall in reaching the 2015 funding target of the Fund and the potential impact on its ability to respond to humanitarian crises during the remainder of 2015 and in early 2016. In that respect, the Group also discussed the need to deepen and diversify the Fund income base and challenges and opportunities, including exploring innovative financing for its resource mobilization efforts. The 2015 high-level pledging event to mark the 10-year anniversary of the Fund and the way forward was also considered as an opportunity to strengthen the positioning of the Fund as the United Nations global emergency response fund.

5. The Group received updates on policy issues, including the mid-year analysis of the 2014 resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator reports, the finalization of a

policy for communication in case of fraudulent use of Central Emergency Response Fund funds and the preliminary findings from the independent review of the added value of the Fund in the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. Further to those discussions, the Advisory Group made the observations and recommendations set out below.

Observations and recommendations

6. The Advisory Group agreed that ensuring a fully funded Central Emergency Response Fund was a priority. The Group also acknowledged that the members of the Fund could play a key advocacy role in helping the Fund to reach its annual funding target and in strengthening the position of the Fund as an indispensable mechanism for global humanitarian action. The Group proposed that advocacy about the funding gap should emphasize the potential impact it would have on the ability of the Fund to respond to humanitarian needs.

7. Members agreed that the Fund should further strengthen its advocacy and communication with regard to the achievements of the Fund in order to enhance the visibility of donor contributions. Donors should be able to clearly demonstrate to their constituencies that contributing to the Fund represented a good use of public money and a sound investment. The Fund should capitalize on its proven track record to garner additional financial support. The Fund was recognized as one of the best ways to provide fast, predictable and impartial funding for sudden-onset and underfunded crises. The comparative advantage of the Fund was its ability to demonstrate — in an independent and impartial manner — international humanitarian solidarity towards people in need.

8. The Advisory Group agreed that while the Fund should have a drive towards innovation in its core, it should take full advantage of its current and past success. Advocacy for a “Central Emergency Response Fund for the future” should therefore be nuanced to ensure that the sound perception of its current effectiveness and its achievements over the past decade was not jeopardized.

9. There was general consensus that in the context of increasing global humanitarian needs, a larger Fund would be warranted and that an increase in funding would enable the Fund to better meet its objectives. It was noted that, as a prerequisite, a larger funding target should be linked to new funding and a broader donor base, including engagement with new actors and the private sector. An expanded Fund, however, must remain focused, well-managed, effective, flexible and quick.

10. The Advisory Group acknowledged the strong performance of the Fund but agreed that additional political advocacy would improve the positioning of the Fund relative to other funding mechanisms and the case for investment in the Fund. The Group requested that better branding and a stronger narrative be developed to increase political support for the Fund, including among Member States outside the current top contributors to the Fund.

11. The Advisory Group agreed that the donor base of the Fund should be broadened and diversified through enhanced outreach activities. The members appreciated the potential of innovative financing as a new and untapped area for humanitarian action but also advised caution regarding the need to consider the specific mandate of the Fund in this regard.

12. The Advisory Group encourages the improvement of linkages between the Fund and non-humanitarian funding mechanisms, especially in protracted humanitarian emergencies, and the strengthening of Fund partnerships with middle-income economies, regional organizations and the private sector.

13. The Advisory Group agreed on the value of discussing the use of United Nations-assessed contributions to fully or partly fund the Central Emergency Response Fund since it helped to signal a common global responsibility for addressing humanitarian crises through the funding of humanitarian action. However, the Group took note that not all Member States were in favour of the modality and acknowledged that funding the Fund through assessed contributions might make the Fund subject to administrative processes that could potentially undermine its flexibility, rapid response capability, independence and impartiality.

14. The Advisory Group acknowledged that more flexibility in the division of funds allocated between the rapid response and the underfunded emergencies windows of the Fund could allow the Emergency Relief Coordinator to better respond to global needs, particularly in the context of more protracted humanitarian crises.

15. The Advisory Group welcomed the mid-year analysis of the 2014 resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinators reports. Members acknowledged the positive assessments of the added value of the Fund provided by the resident/humanitarian coordinators in their reports. The Group reflected on the importance of ensuring fast onward disbursement of the funds from recipient agencies to their implementing partners, an issue that will be on the agenda of the first meeting of 2016.

16. The Advisory Group requested that it be kept informed about potential fraudulent use of Fund allocations and about challenges in communicating fraud cases and suggested that the issue be discussed at the next meeting.

17. The Advisory Group agreed that the outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit and the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing could have an impact on the future of the Fund. The Group underlined the importance of engagement with those processes to strengthen the critical role of the Fund as a reliable investment tool in the global humanitarian financing landscape and offered its availability to the Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator to play a key role in advising them on this issue. The two processes, in addition to the 2015 high-level pledging event to mark the 10-year anniversary of the Fund, provided important platforms for promoting the possible expansion of the Fund.

Administrative matters

18. The Advisory Group agreed that its next meeting should be held before the World Humanitarian Summit, so that the recommendations of its meeting could inform the Summit.