

BACKGROUND

The CERF Advisory Group is a key multi-stakeholder platform established to provide guidance and advice to the Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) on the use and management of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The Group is comprised of experts nominated by Member States, who serve in their individual capacity. The members are appointed by the Secretary-General for a period of three years and broadly represent the humanitarian community, taking into consideration the mix and range of skills and expertise required for the management of a humanitarian fund, including expertise from countries affected by crises.

With the Secretary-General's call for an expansion of CERF to \$1 billion by 2018 and the General Assembly's endorsement of this call, the current and coming years are particularly important for CERF. To ensure that the Advisory Group is capable of providing strong strategic support during this critical period, a strong Group is vital. Against this background and considering the arrival of newly appointed members to the Group, this document is intended to guide Advisory Group members about their expected roles and responsibilities during and beyond the two annual meetings of the Group. The note complements the Term of Reference (ToR) of the Group and briefly describes expectations to the members during the Group's meetings; as well as expectations to the members as champions for CERF. The note also includes a brief description of selected CERF policy and performance areas that the Group in recent years has particularly impacted.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

According to the ToR¹, the Advisory Group provides recommendations to the ERC and the Secretary-General for the improvement of fund implementation and use. These recommendations are shared with Member States by the Secretary-General through the President of the General Assembly. The specific areas that the Group provides recommendations on include:

- timeliness and appropriateness of CERF allocations;
- management of the fund, including reporting and the results achieved against fund use;
- fund performance against the objectives set by the General Assembly;
- independent reviews and other evaluations conducted at the initiative of the ERC, of the function and performance of the fund;
- transparency and accountability issues; and
- funding levels and contributions to the fund.

ADVISORY GROUP IMPACT

Since CERF's establishing in 2006, the Advisory Group has significantly impacted the shaping and continued improvement of the fund's performance. The highlights below provide brief summaries of significant strategic developments where the Group in recent years has played a critical role.

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<http://www.unocha.org/cerf/sites/default/files/CERF/events/AGOctober2016/SESSION1/1%20CERF%20Advisory%20Group%20Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf>

Programme Support Costs: In 2016, CERF reduced its programme support costs (PSC) from 3 to 2 percent freeing up an estimated additional annual \$4 million to disburse to agencies toward urgent requirements.² Through policy support to the development and endorsement of this initiative, as well as vital leverage for required endorsements, the Advisory Group played a central role in shaping and facilitating approval of CERF's 33% PSC reduction.

Efficient Partnerships under CERF Projects: The subject of partnerships under CERF grants is a standing agenda item in the first Advisory Group meeting of every year. Following pressure from the Group on some recipient agencies to reduce the time it takes to disburse CERF funding to their implementing partners, several agencies have initiated measures to further improve their timeliness and in some cases successfully increased their pace. These initiatives can mainly be attributed to the Advisory Group. UNICEF's initiated measures for improvement of CERF sub-grant timeliness are described here:

<http://www.unocha.org/cerf/sites/default/files/CERF/AG2016/UNICEF%20Partnership%20Note%20for%20CERF%20Advisory%20Group%20March%202016.pdf> (copy and paste link)

Grant Reporting Structure: In 2014-2015 the CERF secretariat significantly restructured its grant reporting process. Until 2014/2015, the process had involved a fixed annual deadline for submission of grant reports to CERF by Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators. This created challenges in terms of workload, timeliness and quality of the reports. Following encouragement and guidance by the Advisory Group, the reporting process was restructured to follow the CERF grant cycle whereby grant reports are received by CERF on a rolling basis throughout the year, which has successfully addresses many of the former challenges related the process. The current reporting process is described here:

<http://www.unocha.org/cerf/sites/default/files/CERF/events/AGOctober2016/SESSION1/7k%20RCHC%20Reporting%20Guidelines.pdf> (copy and paste link)

Advocacy and Engagement: Several Advisory Group members have particularly in recent years advocated successfully for CERF with own governments, neighboring countries and regional groupings. This has involved direct advocacy specifically for CERF, as well as highlighting the importance of CERF's complementarity with country-based pooled funds for the maximizing of impact. In addition to increased funding, this has for instance included initiating the hosting of regional CERF briefings by members' governments, as well as the spearheading of new innovative funding modalities for CERF, including a risk insurance initiative and a fair-sharing initiative (both being developed for further discussion both internally in OCHA, with Advisory Group members and more broadly with partners).

ADVISORY GROUP MEETINGS

The CERF Advisory Group meets twice a year at times that are appropriate for reviewing the annual use and implementation of the fund. The meetings usually take place in Geneva and New York or in field locations that allow for visits of the members to CERF funded projects. All Group members are expected to attend both meetings of the year. As members are appointed in their personal capacity, meeting participation cannot be delegated.

Ahead of each meeting, the CERF secretariat will share relevant background material, including summary of previous meeting. Members are expected to thoroughly familiarize themselves with meeting agenda and background material in advance of the meetings.

² This is based on a \$450 million funding level and will more than double with a \$1 billion funding level.

As meetings only take place twice a year and considering the relevance of the Group in guiding the Secretary-General and the ERC on the use and management of CERF, it is imperative that all members are engaged in the meetings and actively contribute to the discussions.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY TOWARDS THE \$1 BILLION

As mentioned in the last bullet above from the ToR, the Advisory Group holds a specific role in advising and supporting the Secretary-General, the ERC and by extension the CERF secretariat on efforts towards meeting its intended annual funding target. Following the Secretary-General and General Assembly's call to strengthen CERF as the global emergency response fund and doubling its fundraising target, this responsibility of the Advisory Group members is critical. By extension, and as recognized by the members during the October meeting in 2016, the Advisory Group has an advocacy role, including towards achieving the annual target through active outreach at the national and regional levels and through their peer networks. Assuming this responsibility, Advisory Group members are expected to actively pursue the following activities that are deemed vital for driving the headway needed to strengthen and expand partnerships for CERF:

- **Advocating for CERF with Member States:** CERF enjoys a donor base of 126 member States and other regional and private organizations. However, most of its contributions come from its top 20 donors (90 per cent). Reaching CERF's new funding target is reliant on enhanced financial support from both existing and new governmental donors. Advisory Group members are expected to advocate for funding to CERF within own countries and regions and with counterparts in other governments. With the existing core donors to the fund, the members and their Governments are encouraged to help strengthen the conviction of their peer donors and their constituents on the vitality of the fund. Members of the Advisory Group and their Governments, are also strongly encouraged to engage with the non-traditional group of donors to help the fund broaden its donors base.
- **Supporting CERF Funding Initiatives:** To diversify CERF's income base, the CERF secretariat is pursuing a variety of innovative funding modalities. Some of these were initiated by Advisory Group members and spearheaded by their respective governments. Advisory Group members are through the meetings of the Group expected to contribute actively to discussions about innovative financing modalities and where possible and relevant, spearhead such initiatives. These could include but are not limited to initiatives related to match funding, private sector funding, crowd funding and insurance modalities.
- **Ensuring that the Fund's expansion is featured adequately in major regional communication platforms:** Beyond efforts with own governments and bilateral promotion with other Member States, engaging with major regional platforms for communicating the strategic value added of the fund is critical. This can take place through advocating with regional groupings – for instance through the hosting of regional CERF briefings in the build up towards CERF pledging conferences in December.

To enable the Advisory Group members' active championing of CERF, the CERF secretariat throughout the year ensures close collaboration with Advisory Group members. The CERF secretariat continuously informs the Advisory Group about provided CERF allocations, CERF's funding situation, new policy and strategic developments, as well as key advocacy messages and communication tools translated to relevant languages. The CERF secretariat also ensures bilateral discussions with each individual Advisory Group member regarding funding from respective government, as well as support for the pursuit of advocacy and funding opportunities with other governments.