

1. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Advisory Group met on 8-9 December 2025 under the Chairpersonship of Ms. Nicole McHugh (Ireland). The meeting primarily focused on CERF's role within the Humanitarian Reset and steps required to advance resource mobilization and advocacy, as informed by the Group's participation in the CERF High-Level Pledging Event (HLPE) on 9 December. The Group also engaged and shared its recommendations with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (USG) and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Mr. Tom Fletcher.
2. In the first session, Ms. Alice Armanni Sequi, Chief of the Pooled Fund Branch (PFB), provided an update on efforts to align CERF (and the Country/Regional Funds) within the Humanitarian Reset and the UN80. She set out the vision for the Funds, building on extensive consultations undertaken with a range of partners (donors, UN agencies and NGOs) and with the Advisory Group (in May and June), noting that the Funds are ideally placed to maximize impact with the limited resources available. She noted that the Funds are able to bring partners together with greater operational join-up; help advance collective, strategic initiatives defined by Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) in consultation with country-level stakeholders; provide support in a flexible manner so that humanitarian operations can adapt to local realities; and drive impact and efficiency while also offering low costs, transparency and accountability. Ms. Armanni Sequi also underscored that the Funds reflect the lean, efficient and unbranded humanitarian model that the UN80 aims to promote. Together with Mr. Michael Jensen, Chief of the CERF Secretariat, Ms. Armanni Sequi further detailed CERF's role in the Humanitarian Reset, emphasizing a sharper focus on its core strengths: enabling responses to major, high-severity crises where UN leadership adds distinct operational value and acting as the UN's response engine through fast, flexible, strategic and catalytic allocations.
3. Mr. Jensen further outlined that CERF will continue to scale up anticipatory action to promote better quality, more dignified and more cost-efficient aid, building on the Fund's position as the largest global financier of collective anticipatory action. CERF will also provide high-impact injections of funding in the most underfunded, highest priority emergencies – delivering flexible resources at the right time to strengthen the quality and reach of a humanitarian response. The Fund will drive better quality aid and advance key policy priorities in its allocations, including through thematic allocations that help progress support for gender, disability inclusion and protection more broadly, climate-smart humanitarian action, and the use of cash assistance as the default modality. Mr. Jensen also noted that, looking ahead, CERF will lean forward on advancing more accountable and localized practices within the UN humanitarian system – essentially by promoting standards for equitable partnerships and expecting that local actors and affected communities are meaningfully involved in CERF-related decision-making processes. Finally, he noted that CERF will increasingly act as a “force multiplier” by collaborating with other funding sources, including pooled funds across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, to bring in and/or bring together funding streams for more coherent, joined-up and impactful action. CERF-funded anticipatory action initiatives, for example, have offered a platform for building complementarity and collaboration between humanitarian and development partners and host governments. He further highlighted that the CERF Climate Action Account has helped bring climate-related financing and action to fragile contexts that otherwise benefit little from traditional climate funding, advancing climate-smart humanitarian approaches that connect to longer term climate adaptation and resilience. Finally, Mr. Jensen noted the opportunity to more systematically leverage CERF allocations for pursuing strategic partnerships and co-financing models around specific themes or emergencies.
4. The Advisory Group praised OCHA's consultative process and expressed strong support for CERF's emerging vision, noting that it “ticks all the right boxes”. The Group praised CERF's ability to promote coordination and strategic coherence within the humanitarian system, as well as its ambition to reinforce complementarity and collaboration with other pooled funds. The Group noted CERF's crucial role in advancing positive change in the humanitarian system, highlighting the Fund's leadership in climate-smart humanitarian solutions, and articulating support for the scale-up of CERF's

anticipatory action portfolio. The Advisory Group also appreciated the role of CERF in promoting good localization practices by UN agencies, recognizing positive progress made in UN agencies' sub-granting of CERF funding to local partners, while keeping in mind also the value added of UN agencies' international presence vis a vis CBPFs focus on localization. The Group found it encouraging that local and national partners are the preferred partners for UN agencies under CERF allocations, with some members encouraging CERF to be increasingly prescriptive with UN agencies, including by expecting clear targets and standards for engagement of local actors in prioritization processes of CERF grants. The Advisory Group also expressed appreciation for the CERF Climate Action Account and the Fund's enabling of climate-smart action. The Group also articulated support for CERF's thematic allocations and identified these as an avenue to mobilize additional donor support.

5. The Group inquired about the level of UN agencies' commitment towards CERF's emerging vision, noting the importance of broad buy-in. It noted the importance of ensuring that CERF helps incentivise agencies to drive positive reform under UN80, particularly in promoting greater efficiency, improved coordination, stronger accountability and more programmatic focus on prioritized Humanitarian Response Plans. The Group called for strengthening visibility efforts and demonstrating how OCHA-managed Pooled Funds operate as a complementary suite of tools at the country level, particularly through their contribution to protection. The Group emphasized the need to communicate the impact of Reset-related initiatives as they are implemented. Members also stressed balancing CERF's support for hyper-prioritized crises with preserving its global mandate. Other members noted CERF's potential to foster more coordinated data use, given the growing importance of unified data informing streamlined humanitarian action.

6. The Advisory Group also engaged with the RC/HCs and Deputy Special Representatives to Afghanistan and Somalia, Mr. Indrika Ratwatte and Mr. George Conway, who spoke to CERF's strategic value at the country level and its role in operationalizing the Reset. The same session was also joined by the Director of WFP's New York Liaison Office, Mr. Ally-Raza Qureshi, to offer a UN agency view on CERF's positioning in the Reset. Both RC/HCs highlighted CERF's unique value in enabling targeted, data-driven responses and strengthening coordination at country level. Mr. Conway highlighted CERF's role in Somalia, where small but strategic allocations, combined with Somalia Humanitarian Fund resources, have supported area-based prioritization and anticipatory/early action. He stressed CERF's flexibility as critical in volatile contexts and noted progress on localization and operational efficiency under the Reset. Mr. Ratwatte echoed these points for Afghanistan, describing CERF as a "parachute" enabling life-saving interventions and rapid scale-up during shocks, and outlined its role in joint anticipatory action with the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. Mr. Qureshi emphasized CERF's value for WFP, citing its ability to complement internal financing and sustain critical programming, while supporting strategic initiatives. He cautioned that localization should go beyond 'partner count' to include government and private sector engagement.

7. The Advisory Group recognized the critical role of CERF in Afghanistan and Somalia and applauded the RC/HCs for their leadership in operationalizing the Reset at the country level using CERF resources. Members raised questions to the RC/HCs regarding CERF's complementarity with the Country/Regional Funds and inquired about the optimal balance between direct core UN funding and support to CERF. The Group noted the importance of Humanitarian Country Teams offering sharper evidence of impact of CERF funding and noted to the RC/HCs the importance of CERF's efforts to drive system-wide collaboration under UN80, including by promoting complementarity with other funding streams in a context of declining humanitarian and development financing.

8. In a session on resource mobilization and advocacy for CERF, Mr. Jean Verheyden, Chief of OCHA's Donor Relations Section, presented an overview of the current humanitarian financing landscape and its implications for CERF. Highlighting the sharp decline in global humanitarian funding – down by nearly 50 per cent since 2022 – he examined shifts in donor trends and funding modalities. With CERF's projected 2025 income of just over \$400 million, Mr. Verheyden outlined OCHA's efforts to intensify fundraising, including enhanced political advocacy through the USG/ERC, private-sector outreach and public fundraising initiatives. Ms. Najwa Mekki, Chief of OCHA's Communication Branch, provided updates on recent efforts to enhance CERF's visibility through media briefings, co-

creation of content with partners, and collaboration with content creators. She also presented the campaign to celebrate CERF's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary during 2026.

9. The Advisory Group then engaged in group discussions focused on how members can support fundraising and advocacy for CERF. The Group emphasized the need for continued strong visibility and compelling impact stories to showcase added value, noting that current messaging does not always resonate with domestic political leadership. Members highlighted the importance of adapting CERF's fundraising strategy, with a particular focus on private-sector engagement and philanthropy as untapped opportunities. Suggestions included leveraging global platforms such as COP and the World Economic Forum to broaden outreach. At the same time, members recognized the importance of their efforts in embedding support for CERF into government policies and tailoring advocacy to specific regional and national contexts. Members also suggested expanding beyond traditional peer-to-peer circles by using content creators and regional approaches to attract diverse contributors. The Advisory Group Chair, Ms. Nicole McHugh, offered to provide peer-to-peer support related to CERF's Climate Action Account to help unlock interest in the capitals of other CERF donors.

10. In the final session, the Group engaged with the USG/ERC, who provided an update on the Reset and reaffirmed CERF's role as a cornerstone of this process, echoing strong appreciation for the Fund among IASC principals. The ERC thanked the Group for its contributions during the May and June meetings, noting their role in shaping CERF's vision. He emphasized the ambition to reinvigorate CERF as the UN global response engine, delivering the best the UN can offer. He outlined a vision where CERF and the Country/Regional Funds operate together to drive better and more joined-up humanitarian responses. Reflecting on the HLPE, he expressed optimism on CERF fulfilling a key role in the humanitarian financing landscape, noting that despite a challenging funding environment, CERF has been less impacted than other parts of the system and its share of global humanitarian financing has likely proportionally grown thanks to continued donor support. The ERC also outlined priorities for advocacy and resource mobilization, including leveraging CERF's 20th anniversary, expanding engagement with the private sector, and targeting potential donors in underrepresented regions such as Latin America and Asia-Pacific. He stressed the need for innovation, efficiency and data-driven delivery, positioning CERF as a vanguard for reform and an incubator for new approaches, including anticipatory action and climate-smart programming. He committed to improving real-time communications on CERF's impact, strengthening data collaboration, and exploring thematic funding opportunities for protection and gender. The ERC also called on members to champion CERF with domestic audiences and emerging donors, and to support efforts to close the Global Humanitarian Overview's funding gap through coordinated outreach in the coming months.

11. The Advisory Group reiterated its support for CERF's role in the Reset. Members called for CERF to play a greater role in incentivizing agency reforms on areas such as localization, coordination and streamlined delivery – without adding transaction layers. Related hereto, the Group noted the importance of UN agencies making a strong case for CERF's unique value proposition and emphasized the need for improved data and impact stories to demonstrate the Fund's added value, including co-financing examples and cost-effectiveness metrics. The Group offered to help ensure that Member States drive these messages through their roles on UN agency boards. The Group backed positioning CERF as a platform for emerging donors, and members from Azerbaijan, the Philippines and South Africa offered to advance regional initiatives to galvanize further support to CERF from their respective regions. The Group also reaffirmed its commitment to CERF's efforts to drive innovation and particularly scaling up Anticipatory Action.

12. Director of OCHA's Finance and Outreach Division, Ms. Lisa Doughten and Ms. Nicole McHugh thanked members for their invaluable support and informed that the next meeting of the Group is expected to be held in May/June 2026. Given changes in the Group's membership, another deep dive on CERF's decision-making approaches was proposed for the next meeting.