

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS CERF ADVISORY GROUP MEETING 5-6 DECEMBER 2019



1. The CERF Advisory Group was established by General Assembly resolution 60/124 to advise the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), on the use and impact of the fund. The second meeting of the Group in 2019 was held in New York on 5 and 6 December and was chaired by Alison Milton (Ireland). The ERC Mark Lowcock participated in two of the meeting sessions.

2. In the first session of the meeting, the Chair, the Director of the Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division (HFRMD), Lisa Carty and the Chief of the Pooled Fund Management Branch (PFMB), Ms. Lisa Doughten welcomed five new members to the Group, including Abdul Hannan, Bangladesh, Honorary Advisor, All-Party Parliamentary Group of the Bangladesh National Parliament; Thomas Zahneisen, Germany, Director for Humanitarian Assistance, German Federal Foreign Office; Mariët Schuurman, Netherlands, Director of the Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands; Yngvild Berggrav, Norway, Policy Director, Section for Humanitarian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Noralyn Jubaira-Baja, Philippines, Assistant Secretary, Office of United Nations and International Organizations, Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs; and Saud H. al-Shamsi, UAE, Deputy Permanent Representative, United Arab Emirates Mission to the United Nations and Amanda Magambo, Uganda, Head of Civilian Component Uganda Rapid Deployment Capability Centre (not present). The Chair presented the meeting agenda and summarized recommendations and conclusions from the Group's meeting in June 2019.

3. The Chief of PFMB briefed on the use of the Fund during 2019. The Branch Chief informed that in 2019, as a result of the increasing humanitarian needs around the globe, CERF had supported life-saving humanitarian operations at a total value of \$525 million - the highest amount ever allocated by CERF in one single year. The grants have targeted a range of humanitarian crises, from the hurricanes in Mozambique to the Ebola outbreak and droughts in Africa. A total of \$325 million has been allocated to new or deteriorating crises through CERF's Rapid Response (RR) window, and \$200 million has been allocated to 21 forgotten crises through CERF's Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) window. The Chief also presented the recent strengthening of CERF's UFE methodology, and specifically the improvements in the CERF Index for Risk and Vulnerability (CERF), through the incorporation of the INFORM Global Crisis Severity Index.

4. The Advisory Group welcomed presentations by UNFPA Director of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services, Ms. Fabienne Flambert and UNICEF Director of the Internal Audit and Investigations Office, Mr. Stephen Zimmermann on the respective agencies' efforts and challenges in identifying fraud cases and determining if CERF funds are impacted. Following these and presentations from WFP and FAO in the previous Advisory Group meeting, the Group concluded that agencies' challenges in ensuring effective reporting of potential cases of fraud to CERF reflect wider systematic challenges in the humanitarian system. Specifically, the challenge of identifying and addressing potential fraud cases in challenging operational contexts, including determining which funding sources are impacted. The Group expressed appreciation for CERF's continued efforts to clarify with agencies their responsibilities with regard to identifying and reporting on potential cases of fraud. The Group also expressed hope that CERF's established and agreed processes for communicating potential cases of fraud can support efforts within the UN humanitarian system to strengthen fraud management processes and promote further streamlining of agencies' handling of fraud matters and donors' reporting requirements, as well as risk tolerance. The Group proposed that OCHA, through its fund-management role of CERF and Country-Based Pooled Funds, could play a more significant role in promoting a system-wide strengthening of fraud and risk management in the UN system.

5. The Chief of OCHA's Partnership and Resource Mobilization Branch (PRMB), Marcy Vigoda, provided an update on CERF's 2019 funding status, as well as an analysis of funding trends over the last decade. She noted that projected income for 2019 stood at \$538.6 million against the record high \$555 million received in 2018. Some Member States have indicated the possibility of additional 2019 funding. Expected pledges to be made at the 9 December CERF High-

Level Pledging Event stood at \$438 million, \$0.5 million short of what was pledged at last year's event. The Chief of PRMB presented resource mobilization, advocacy and visibility/communication efforts conducted over the last six months and laid out opportunities for further outreach and advocacy for CERF in 2020. The Group was also informed that in 2019, 50 Member States have contributed to CERF, and that a total of 125 different Member States had contributed to CERF since inception, with 2009 seeing the highest number in one year with 83 Member States contributing. The Group strongly endorsed the ongoing work on communication and visibility and noted the importance of continued simple communication on CERF's important role in enabling critical humanitarian action, in order to maintain political interest and broaden CERF's donor base. The Group discussed further analysing donor behaviour, in particular why some Member States have stopped contributing to CERF over time, as well as continue to explore other sources of possible funding such as the private sector and Islamic social financing.

6. In a session on strategic CERF initiatives, the Group was updated by the Chief of PFMB on the ERC's "strategic steers" initiative to encourage more attention to four important, but generally underfunded areas in CERF funding proposals (women and girls, persons with disabilities, emergency education and other areas of protection). The Chief reminded the Group that the objective of the initiative is to ensure an increased focus on, and visibility of, the four areas at the strategic level of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and UN/Humanitarian Country Teams and at project level for individual UN agencies. The Chief underlined the ERC's message that CERF will remain needs-based, and that all activities will continue to be funded in line with CERF's mandate. The Chief also updated the Group on the CERF multiyear pilot grant - in support of emergency education in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh - highlighting the comparative advantages of CERF in relation to multiyear funding, compared to bilateral multi-year funding to individual agencies.

7. The Group was also updated by Mr. Dirk-Jan Omtzigt, Head of OCHA's Humanitarian Financing Strategy and Analysis Unit and Mr. Michael Jensen, Chief of the CERF secretariat, on CERF's anticipatory action pilot, highlighting that OCHA, with the World Bank and other partners, has developed a crisis risk financing mechanism for Somalia to release finance from CERF and others if an out-of-the-ordinary drought shock is projected to result in extraordinary humanitarian need. Since the last Advisory Group meeting in June, OCHA has conducted three missions to Somalia with partners (World Bank, FAO, WFP, IFRC and Start Network) to develop a Somalia Anticipatory Action Plan. CERF is now ready to disburse funding if triggers are reached. It was discussed that the Somalia Anticipatory Action plan is not a CERF-specific plan, but an overall Anticipatory Action plan for Somalia against which CERF would fund certain elements falling within its life-saving mandate.

8. The Group was also updated by the Chief of PFMB on the ongoing review of CERF's life-saving criteria, and the series of internal discussions and external consultations with UN agencies to identify key aspects and areas of the life-saving criteria that require further refinement, clarification or updating in accordance with developments since 2010. Finally, the Group was informed about two planned reviews under the CERF Performance and Accountability Framework, including a review of the ERC's strategic steer initiative in a number of selected countries, and a review of CERF's role in smaller-scale emergencies, where CERF funds often constitute the largest – and at times the only - proportion of funding to the response. The Advisory Group welcomed the updates and reiterated its support to CERF's use of anticipatory action, the strategic steer initiative and CERF's review of its life-saving criteria. The Group acknowledged the benefits of multiyear humanitarian funding and looked forward to a briefing on the lessons learned from the pilot in Bangladesh to assess CERF's comparative advantage in providing such funding. The Group expressed general support for CERF's role as a driver of innovation in the humanitarian sector while sustaining and strengthening CERF's current effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility.

8. In a session with the ERC, Mark Lowcock, and the RC/HCs for Cameroon and Ukraine, Ms. Allegra Baiocchi and Ms. Osnat Lubrani, the Group discussed the implementation of the ERC's strategic steers at field level. The RC/HCs expressed great appreciation for the initiative emphasizing that it has provided them a reinforced mandate to ensure attention to these four important areas and significantly strengthened their position and leadership role in CERF processes. The RC/HCs noted that the 2019 CERF allocations where the four strategic steers were systematically considered are still under implementation, so more data will be available in the future on the impact of the strategic steers

initiative. The Advisory Group applauded the objectives of the initiative and suggested a thorough learning process to assess results.

9. In another session with the ERC, the Advisory Group members from Indonesia and Nigeria reflected on the role of CERF in their respective countries, particularly praising CERF's support to protracted and underfunded conflict-related crises, its ability to ensure fast and timely life-saving assistance to sudden onset emergencies, and to foster stronger coordination and collaboration among humanitarian actors. The ERC highlighted that the humanitarian community is facing more frequent and intense natural disasters; ever-more protracted conflicts; a growing number of people in need of assistance; and increasing operational costs on the ground. As a consequence, the ERC concluded that the humanitarian system needs to change to succeed and suggested that CERF can play a role in supporting further improvements to the humanitarian system, including by functioning as a role model in key strategic areas. At the same time, he underlined that CERF's priorities will remain its fast response to new and deteriorating emergencies, as well as its support to underfunded humanitarian operations. The Advisory Group reiterated its appreciation for the piloting of new allocation initiatives in a structured manner, with built-in learning to inform decisions on future innovation, while ensuring that CERF's clear mandate is sustained and strengthened. The Group also emphasized that CERF's current 'compelling simplicity' and its ability to provide fast and short-term life-saving grants makes it unique and an easy vehicle to "sell" to ministers and parliaments. The Group recalled the relevant expertise available in the CERF Advisory Group and reiterated its availability to play a role as an advisory mechanism on strategic initiatives and in general on the use of the Fund. The Group also advised the ERC that they stood ready to discuss emerging learning from ongoing new initiatives and next steps at future meetings.