

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS - CERF ADVISORY GROUP MEETING – 30 JAN. 2023



1. The second Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Advisory Group meeting of 2022 took place on January 30th, 2023, under the chairmanship of Mr. Carl Skau (Sweden), and with participation of the USG/ERC, Mr. Martin Griffiths. The meeting was postponed from December 2022 and held virtually due to unforeseen scheduling issues.
2. In an introductory session, Lisa Doughten, the Director of OCHA's Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division (HFRMD) thanked Mr. Carl Skau for assuming the Chairmanship of the CERF Advisory Group. The Director also welcomed eight new members to the CERF Advisory Group: Mr. Cristian Torres Bermeo, Director at the National Service for Risk and Emergency Management, Ecuador, Ms. Susanne Fries-Gaier, Director for Humanitarian Assistance in the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Mr. Hesham Huwisa, Head of the Humanitarian Affairs Division of the Mission of the State of Libya to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva, Ms. Caecilia Wijgers, acting Ambassador of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands to Afghanistan, Ms. Hilde Salvesen, Policy Director of the Section for Humanitarian Affairs of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aqeel Jamaan Al-Ghamdi, Assistant Supervisor General for Planning and Development of King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, Saudi Arabia, Ms. Sarah Charles, Assistant to the Administrator at the U.S. Agency for International Development and Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance, United States of America, Mr. Zvinechimwe R. Churu, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works of Zimbabwe.
3. In the first session, the USG/ERC provided an update on the broader humanitarian landscape and the humanitarian system's response capacity, including that of CERF and its positioning in the humanitarian landscape. He noted that the humanitarian system in 2023 is facing unprecedented challenges, including the growing funding gap. The USG/ERC flagged that climate-related crises are increasingly driving escalating humanitarian needs. He noted the importance of ensuring data-informed Anticipatory Action ahead of expected climate-related crises, and on ensuring that climate-financing offers an increased focus on saving lives and building resilience in humanitarian contexts. The USG/ERC also raised the concerning humanitarian situation in Ukraine, including its secondary socio-economic impacts, as well as the reduced attention on other protracted crises. The USG/ERC stressed that with humanitarian needs outpacing available resources, the quality of humanitarian financing is pivotal, and that CERF remains a key vehicle for ensuring efficiencies across the humanitarian system.
4. He underlined CERF's efforts to continuously evolve and innovate to ensure effective use of scarce resources. He also noted CERF's support to Anticipatory Action frameworks that have promoted faster and more dignified humanitarian action for predictable humanitarian shocks, in particular climate-related shocks. He highlighted CERF's increasing support for local responders, as well as the Fund's catalytic role in ensuring prioritization of lifesaving assistance for the most vulnerable. He however emphasized that CERF's resources are insufficient for responding to the growing humanitarian needs and reminded of the importance of UN Member States living up to their commitment from 2016 in General Assembly resolution 71/127 to support an increase of CERF's annual funding target to \$1 billion.
5. The Advisory Group expressed support for the USG/ERC's priorities for CERF and voiced appreciation for the management of the Fund, noting that CERF is becoming increasingly important for the humanitarian system's ability to respond rapidly to the growing needs. The Group commended CERF on its continued role as a vehicle for enabling fast and timely support around the world, as well as on its commitment to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met. The Group expressed its

continued commitment to CERF's efforts to promote positive change in the humanitarian system through its innovative and catalytic efforts. The Group further reiterated its support for CERF's Anticipatory Action efforts and encouraged a further mainstreaming of this agenda while also requesting further information on the timeframe and possible fixed percentage for funding of Anticipatory Action.

6. The Advisory Group referred to the growing gap between global humanitarian needs and available resources and reiterated the importance of ensuring that funding from CERF is used in a strategic and prioritized manner, making sure that key areas of engagement such as protection are adequately focused on. In continuation hereof, the Group asked for insight into CERF's decision-making and prioritization processes, requesting a more in-depth discussion on the topic. Finally, the Group confirmed its availability to support advocacy and peer-to-peer efforts in support of resource mobilization for the Fund and asked for further guidance on how it can support these efforts, as well as more insight into current fundraising priorities, related challenges and recent successful efforts to reengage former donors as well as identifying new donors.

7. In the second session, the Director of HFRMD invited the Group to advise on CERF's positioning in the climate-financing space. In line with a discussion paper shared with the Group ahead of the meeting, the Chief of the Pooled Fund Management Branch (PFMB), Alice Armani Sequi noted that the climate crisis already is a humanitarian crisis, and that global warming continues to drive more frequent and extreme weather events impacting the most vulnerable. The Chief informed that OCHA is engaging with partners to assess the role of the humanitarian financing architecture within the broader climate-financing landscape, including the role of CERF. She further noted that CERF currently fills an important niche in the climate-crises landscape, with more than one quarter of all its funding historically provided in response to climate-related humanitarian shocks, often in contexts of fragility and violence where climate finance mechanisms have struggled to reach. In continuation hereof, she reiterated that CERF is well placed to fulfil an expanded role in the overall climate-financing architecture, while continuing to support humanitarian response for all types of humanitarian crises in line with its mandate.

8. The PFMB Chief emphasized that CERF is well-positioning to contribute to climate-crises responses by a) enabling timely, coordinated multi-sectoral response to humanitarian needs caused by climate shocks; b) supporting anticipatory and early humanitarian action to predictable climate shocks to mitigate the humanitarian impact and reduce requirements; c) financing life-saving humanitarian action that at the same time strengthens vulnerable communities' ability to face future shocks, making humanitarian funds also work for climate resilience (climate-smart humanitarian action); and d) incentivizing partners to reduce their climate and broader environmental impact of humanitarian action (climate-friendly humanitarian action). She however also noted that for CERF to address the humanitarian needs generated by climate change and reach its full potential in responding to climate disasters, the Fund would require additional funding – potentially from dedicated climate finance.

9. The Advisory Group welcomed the opportunity to discuss CERF's positioning in the climate disaster response space and expressed appreciation for being consulted early on this important agenda. While some members expressed scepticism towards pursuing dedicated climate financing through a clearer CERF climate profile, others were more supportive, and the Group generally encouraged continued discussion and insight about this important agenda. The Group raised several relevant points and questions to help guide OCHA's thinking and further assessment of the topic. Important points raised included the fact that many climate-driven humanitarian crises fail to attract funding from dedicated climate-financing sources, as well as the general insufficient pace of these sources to ensure timely responses to climate-driven humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable people. Other questions were raised on CERF's comparative advantages in this regard. The Group also emphasized that potential added engagement by CERF in this space must adhere to the Fund's humanitarian mandate.

10. Some members noted the importance of CERF providing more investment for climate-related Anticipatory Action and some specifically noted a potential clearer articulation of CERF's role in addressing climate-related losses and damages. Other members questioned whether CERF will be able to attract dedicated climate funding and noted the importance of demonstrating CERF's added value in this space, as well as to consider the transaction costs related to the vigorous reporting and accountability measures that often are linked to climate funding. The Chief of the CERF secretariat, Michael Jensen responded that donor interest for supporting CERF through dedicated climate funding has been expressed, but that OCHA welcomes further discussion and mapping of challenges relating to transaction costs, reporting and accountability measures. The Group agreed to continue the climate-financing discussion in its next meeting, and to consider opportunities to continue consideration of this topic in the meantime.

11. Beyond continuing the climate-financing discussion, the Advisory Group agreed to also dedicate a session in its next meeting to strategic prioritization of CERF funding, as well as a deeper dive into opportunities for the Group's support of CERF resource mobilisation efforts. The Group also suggested an update by OCHA on the plans for broadening the use of Anticipatory Action. The Advisory Group recommended that the next meeting takes place in-person with the objective of ensuring more focused and advice-oriented discussions, and that OCHA accordingly provides up-front input for such targeted discussions.