

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Advisory Group met on 10 and 11 December 2024 in New York under the Chairpersonship of Ms. Nicole McHugh (Ireland). The Group discussed the use of the Fund since the Group's last meeting in June, CERF's climate action, resource mobilization and advocacy, CERF's 20-year anniversary campaign, anticipatory action and innovative financing mechanisms, and CERF's strategic impact at the country level. The Group also had an opportunity to discuss and share its recommendations with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (USG) and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Mr. Tom Fletcher.

1. In the first session, Mr. Michael Jensen, Chief of the CERF Secretariat, provided highlights on the **use and management of CERF**, including significant allocations since the Advisory Group's June meeting. It was noted that at the time of the meeting, CERF had allocated over \$550 million in 2024 to humanitarian emergencies in more than 40 countries, including to displacement and famine prevention in Sudan as the largest recipient, assisting more than two million people impacted by severe flooding in seven countries in West, Central and East Africa and addressing humanitarian needs in Lebanon and Syria, following the escalating conflict. The Chief updated on CERF's ongoing and forward-looking priorities, noting the (i) continued operationalization of the CERF Climate Action Account facilitating climate smart humanitarian action, (ii) further scale-up of Anticipatory Action frameworks and mainstreaming of Anticipatory Action, (iii) continued efforts to promote quality programming, including Accountability to Affected People and support for women and girls, and (iv) increased efforts to promoting localized humanitarian responses, including identifying best practice and deliberate actions. The Group also received an update on OCHA's efforts to strengthen accountability, transparency, and oversight for CERF and the Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF), the roll-out of the Pooled Funds' grant management system "OneGMS", as well as CERF's reinforced communication and advocacy efforts.

2. The Advisory Group voiced appreciation for the management of the Fund, noting that CERF is critical to the humanitarian system's ability to respond rapidly and effectively to the growing humanitarian needs. The Group also recognized the Fund's central role in supporting field-level inter-agency coordination processes, as well as its ability to leverage additional funding for humanitarian crises. The Group praised CERF for the high quality of the background documents for the meeting and their early distribution, the quality of its reports, advocacy products and data disaggregation and commended CERF for its overall transparency. It also applauded CERF for its efforts to **promote climate-smart humanitarian solutions and for its leading role in Anticipatory Action**. The Advisory Group expressed interest in learning more about CERF's allocation processes and funding decisions, noting that the increasingly challenging humanitarian landscape underscored the importance of ensuring strategic and catalytic use of funding. The Group also expressed appreciation for CERF's efforts on localization and **emphasized the importance of keeping local actors at the centre of the humanitarian system's decision-making process, including in the context of CERF**. Additionally, the Group highlighted the need to continue gathering and disseminating evidence that **demonstrates CERF's role as a strategic instrument that can serve as a catalyst for more effective and impactful humanitarian action**, which it recognized as a key value proposition for investing in CERF. It was recognised that CERF has to balance between being flexible, prioritizing whilst not spreading too thinly - maintaining the focus on "high quality money" spent best. **The Group stressed the importance of ensuring complementarity between CERF and other funding streams**, including CBPFs and funding instruments across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus.

3. In a session on **learning and guidance**, the Advisory Group was briefed on efforts to strengthen learning and knowledge management for the OCHA-managed funds, as well as on ongoing external reviews on CERF's localization efforts and support to Accountability to Affected People agenda. The Group voiced appreciation for CERF's commitment to learning, including its external reviews and the learning framework. **In light of limited resources, the Group encouraged calibrating CERF's level of ambition in this area accordingly and noted the importance of building on existing thematic guidance in the humanitarian sector** when considering fund-specific guidance products around the niche that the Pooled Funds have in advancing thematic priorities. The Group asked OCHA to provide information about the estimated costs associated with the CERF learning framework.

4. The Group also discussed **CERF's strategic value at the country-level** with three UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators. Ms. Clementine Awu Nkweta-Salami, UN Resident Coordinator in Sudan, Ms. Catherine Sozi, UN Resident Coordinator in Mozambique, and Ms. Mireia Villar Forner, UN Resident Coordinator in Colombia. All clearly articulated the added value of CERF from a country perspective, particularly how CERF's evidence-based, timely, and flexible support has helped reach underserved areas, improve UN agency coordination, support more effective and dignified responses including locally led responses, and contribute to leveraging additional resources. Ms. Sozi, highlighted the important catalytic effect of CERF's support for anticipatory action in Mozambique for storms and cholera, as well as the impact of CERF's recent climate-action allocation to help build the adaptive capacity and resilience of affected people for future climate shocks. **The Advisory Group recognized the critical role of CERF in all three countries, while noting the challenges for RC/HCs in navigating competing internal dynamics related to CERF grants, including among UN agencies and in relation to alignment with national and local priorities.** There were, in this context, requests from the Group for a dedicated discussions/session on decision-making about CERF funding, both centrally and at country-level. **The need for further complementarity between CERF resources and other funding streams across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus was also stressed.**

5. In a discussion on **resource mobilization and advocacy**, Ms. Anja Nitzsche, Chief of OCHA's Partnership and Resource Mobilization Branch, informed that at the time of the meeting CERF's projected income for 2024 stood at \$570 million. While this represents an increase from \$559 million in 2023, it is only the second time since 2018 that less than \$600 million has been received. The Chief informed that some \$350 million was pledged at the High-Level Pledging Event on 10 December for 2025, a decrease from the \$419 million pledged last year. Ms. Nitzsche updated the Group on key activities undertaken to deepen and diversify the CERF donor base since the last meeting, highlighting opportunities particularly within the Latin American and Caribbean and Asia-Pacific regions, as well as with private sector. She also underscored the critical role of the Advisory Group in supporting CERF peer-to-peer advocacy. The Advisory Group reiterated the **importance of enhancing communications on CERF's results** and highlighted the need for advocacy materials to be tailored for private individuals and corporations. The Group also stressed the need to link resource mobilization and learning in a more strategic way. Recognizing the challenges involved with bringing the Private Sector on board, the Group urged that continued concerted effort be applied to private sector engagement, including exploring opportunities for the Advisory Group to engage private sector representatives. The Group also encouraged OCHA and the Secretary-General to consider including representatives of the Private Sector in the Advisory Group. Further, the Group emphasized the **important roles of the ERC and the Secretary-General as advocates for CERF** and noted the openness of Advisory Group members to undertake personal advocacy during CERF's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025. The Group also discussed concrete opportunities for outreach, including through Brazil's hosting of the BRICS Summit and COP30 in 2025. The Group noted that the introduction of the CERF Climate Action Account has succeeded in attracting additional financing to CERF, and the Account was recognized as an important tool in ensuring that more climate-action reaches vulnerable people in fragile settings. The Group discussed opportunities to attract further financing to the account, as well as potential innovative partnerships – among other with the Green Climate Fund.

6. Ms. Lisa Doughten, OCHA's Director of Financing and Partnerships, provided an update on **CERF's 20th anniversary project**. Building on a proposal articulated to the Advisory Group during its June meeting, the Director presented plans for a multi-sensory, immersive exhibition, accompanied by a global social media campaign set to run throughout 2025. The anniversary campaign plans were met with enthusiasm, and **the Group stressed the need for the Secretary-General and the USG/ERC to personally engage and commit time to support the CERF's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to ensure ownership and patronage of this important project.** The Group also suggested that these efforts should include clear, measurable fundraising targets and success metrics. The Group stressed the importance of **highlighting impact stories of people assisted with CERF funding** to attract further support, and to **ensure that the exhibition is accessible to stakeholders beyond the humanitarian community**, including the public, private sector, and regional organizations. Advisory Group members offered to leverage their networks and partnerships to help secure venues for the exhibition and amplify campaign messages, while requesting direct asks from OCHA to maximize impact. The Group agreed on the necessity of swift action given the timeline and level of ambition, and the Chair proposed a

dedicated meeting by early 2025 to further discuss how the Group can advance advocacy efforts for the campaign and more broadly, support resource mobilization for the Fund.

7. In a session focused on **innovative financing solutions** for CERF, Mr. Daniel Clarke, Director of the Center for Disaster Protection (CDP), and Mr. Daniel Pfister, Chief of OCHA's Humanitarian Financing and Strategy Analysis team, presented ongoing collaboration between OCHA and CDP on developing risk profiles for OCHA's Anticipatory Action portfolio, with the aim of establishing an insurance/risk-transfer solution for CERF's Anticipatory Action. This would allow CERF to expand its Anticipatory Action efforts while mitigating financial exposure in the event that a high number of Anticipatory Action frameworks trigger simultaneously. Mr. Pfister informed that the next steps for evolving the initiative include procuring broker consultancy services to develop the insurance product and if relevant engaging with donors to secure financial resources for the premium. He thanked Advisory Group member Mr. Colum Wilson for helping secure financial support from the UK for the consultancy services, who urged other Member States to join in and support the next phases of the initiative. The Advisory Group applauded the initiative, **emphasizing the need to explore innovative financing options in a constrained funding environment**. They noted the growing importance of **acting ahead of anticipated crises, recognizing OCHA as a leader in advancing this agenda within the humanitarian system**. Some members pointed out the potential challenge in financing the premium from Official Development Assistance, while others suggested pursuing efforts, including also by garnering support from the private sector.

8. In the final session, the Advisory Group **engaged with the USG/ERC** to discuss its deliberations. The USG/ERC, in his first meeting with the Group after his appointment earlier in the fall, welcomed the recommendations and expressed appreciation for the Group's role in ensuring CERF remains calibrated in line with evolving humanitarian needs. **The USG/ERC outlined his early priorities for his tenure, including driving greater efficiency and innovation and ensuring that local voices remain central to the humanitarian planning process, building on best practices**. As the Chair **reaffirmed the Advisory Group's commitment to supporting CERF's resource mobilization and advocacy efforts**, and committed to reporting back to the USG/ERC on members' contributions at the Group's next meeting, the USG/ERC welcomed this commitment and further **encouraged members to leverage CERF's 20th anniversary as an opportunity to reflect on the Fund's achievements over the past two decades and to consider its future direction**. Additional discussions between the Group and the USG/ERC addressed inter alia the continued critical importance of humanitarian diplomacy, the increasing pressure on multilateralism and potential opportunities for partnering across the system with International Finance Institutions and other Funds and the growing importance of anticipatory humanitarian action, innovative financing and CERF's key role in bringing climate financing to the most fragile contexts.

9. In the closing session, Ms. Lisa Doughten and Ms. Nicole McHugh thanked members for their invaluable support and contributions to the efforts of the Advisory Group. The next meeting of the Advisory Group is to be held in Geneva in June 2025.