

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT HIGH-LEVEL PLEDGING EVENT FOR THE
CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND**

New York, 8 December 2021, 10:00

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Fifteen years ago, the Central Emergency Response Fund was set up to promote swift, coordinated action in humanitarian crises.

Since then, it has more than fulfilled its mission.

CERF is fast and flexible.

I know from personal experience that it is one of the most effective ways to get help to people in crises.

CERF responds in hours, so humanitarian organizations can swing into action as soon as emergencies strike.

CERF is principled, impartial and independent. The help it provides is driven by need alone.

CERF supports neglected crises when others do not.

It listens to women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, and prioritizes their needs.

Last year, more than half of the recipients of CERF funding were women and girls. CERF is also the biggest direct donor to humanitarian programmes that respond to gender-based violence.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

CERF is a proven success story.

That is because it is constantly evolving, applying lessons learned and embracing innovation – in response to risks that are more complex, intertwined, and global.

At the heart of these innovative efforts is the concept of anticipatory action.

This is about making financing available before risks turn into full-blown emergencies.

It is about assistance that is faster, cheaper, and more humane – informed by state-of-the-art data and analytics.

We know anticipatory action works. For example, when forecasts indicated pending drought in Somalia, CERF funding ensured that families could feed their children without having to sell off precious assets to survive.

Similar pilots are now underway in eleven countries.

To scale up these innovative approaches, the CERF is now teaming up with the new Complex Risk Analytics Fund.

This is an alliance between the best data and analysis, and the fastest funding mechanism, for smarter anticipation, prevention, and response to crises.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This year has been one of the most difficult on record for humanitarian need.

But CERF has stepped up to the challenge.

In 2020, CERF helped more than 69 million people – twice as many as the year before. Many of them were reeling from the impact of the pandemic.

CERF released its first multi-country grants, in recognition of the fact that the virus does not respect national borders.

And it introduced an NGO allocation, to boost support for front-line responders.

When violence escalated in northern Ethiopia, CERF released several allocations at critical moments to help save lives.

In August, as Afghanistan was thrown into upheaval, CERF swiftly released funding so that United Nations agencies could scale up their emergency response and keep basic services running.

As acute hunger surged and the risk of famine grew for millions of people, CERF allocated funding for food assistance to some of the hardest-hit countries: Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

And CERF offered help, hope, and solidarity to those caught up in neglected crises, from Venezuela to Cameroon and Chad.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I know everyone here today, like me, believes strongly in CERF.

You are part of CERF's success story.

Thanks to the generosity of its 130 donors, CERF has released \$7.5 billion to save lives and protect people in more than 100 countries over the last 15 years.

But today, humanitarian needs are seven times what they were when CERF was created.

We have seen prolonged conflicts worsen and new ones break out.

Climate change is pushing communities to the brink of survival.

And the battle with COVID-19 is still to be won.

The scale of today's crises demands a strong CERF with the resources it needs to rise to the challenge of responding swiftly at the onset of an emergency.

Member States have shown full support for this. In 2016 you called for CERF to be doubled to reach \$1 billion.

This year, despite the generosity of our donors, we did not get close to reaching this goal.

But we can do so – if Member States allocate just a small percentage of their humanitarian funding through CERF each year.

CERF is a spark of hope in a difficult world.

Let us light that spark for the sake of our shared humanity. Thank you.