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Remarks at Central Emergency Response Fund High-Level Pledging Event for 2024
6 December 2023

As delivered

Thanks very much indeed, and thank you, honourable Secretary-General [António Guterres], for gracing this event and opening it with those remarks. And welcome to all to this 2024 high-level pledging event for the CERF [Central Emergency Response Fund].

I want to thank also, as the Secretary-General did, those teams for bringing the voices of crisis-affected people so vividly into the room with the help of this extraordinary technology. This is a wonderful change from some of the meetings we have had in the past.

And their voices are, of course, the absolutely most important voices when it comes to humanitarian action. And as the Secretary-General has just set out so very clearly, CERF makes a difference. I want to be equally clear on how impactful that can be.

I want to make sure that in doing so, that I speak clearly to the needs of the CERF in general. So, let me start by saying CERF protects in crises big and small. It strengthens critical protection services, including child protection, gender-based violence interventions, and targeted support to people with disabilities.

Just to give one example, when violence soared in Haiti this year, CERF allocated \$2.9 million to provide assistance to more than 12,300 women and girls affected by gender-based violence and for urgent sexual and reproductive health services.

Number two, CERF empowers. No one knows better what people affected by crises need than those people affected by those crises themselves and the ones we have been listening to. This year, additional dedicated funding went to projects that put affected people front and center of the design, implementation and delivery of humanitarian responses. And the Secretary-General has referred to the virtues of anticipatory actions and in which this is a central piece.

It also provides rapid responses to time-critical crises. As the Secretary-General has just said, in 2023, CERF provided the rapid funds we needed to mount urgent humanitarian responses in Sudan and Gaza, the crises we are all living through at the moment.

It did so at the beginning of the year in response to the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria. And immediately after the earthquakes struck, CERF allocated \$50 million to support urgent relief efforts, a lifeline to thousands of people, as those of us who visited those zones at the time can attest.

CERF fights hunger. In February, CERF preemptively allocated \$104 million to avert the risk of famine in eight high-risk countries, including the countries of the Horn of Africa struggling with a record-breaking five-year drought. In total in 2023, CERF allocated \$119 million to support 60 food [security projects in 28 countries].

Excellencies, this year, once again, CERF has proven that it is truly the “for all, by all” fund, as envisaged by the General Assembly when it was created back in 2006. It needs to continue to play such a critical role, if it's fully funded.

We welcome, as the Secretary-General did, the huge generosity of all donors who have contributed to the impact of the Fund this year. But I have to say that, as of early November, just \$532 million had been received for 2023. This is the same level of funding as in 2017, against the backdrop of vastly higher levels of need, a much higher level of support [is needed].

So we are looking forward to more support, as the Secretary-General said, to increasing the numbers of donors, as well as increasing the amount of money. And as we go into 2024 and with the [UN Climate Change Conference] COP [28], where the Secretary-General was – [Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs] Joyce [Msuya] and many others have just returned – behind us, reminding us of the humanitarian consequences of the climate crisis, we will have an even greater task in 2024, and CERF must play its role.

And CERF has launched at COP 28 a new innovation, the CERF Climate Action Account, which specifically provides a quick disbursement channel for climate action money, and it will bolster our ability to anticipate and respond to the impacts of climate change.

Since the inception in 2006, more than 60 Member States have contributed to CERF and have also benefited from its funding. CERF is genuinely the fund of those 60 Member States. It's our fund. It's your fund. It's there for you in your hour of need, it is there for those people who we have been listening to.

I want to thank, finally, everyone for the generous pledges that we will be hearing today, urging other donors to step up, to fully fund CERF, and make sure it's helping and is there whenever disaster strikes. And I know personally from my own experience of this last year, how at every time of great crisis, it is CERF that is among the first to act, to provide that first small gesture of kindness and respect for the people laid down and set down by crisis. Thank you very much.