

Draft statement by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock at the 2020 High Level Event for the Central Emergency Response Fund

Online, 8 December 2020

Excellencies, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Panelists and colleagues, welcome to the Central Emergency Response Fund High-Level Pledging Event. Thank you all for joining us today.

The CERF is first and fastest, and it looks after the forgotten.

I am pleased we are joined today by the Minister of Labour and Social Development in Sudan, Ms. Lena el-Sheikh Omer Mahjoub; the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Steve Mbikayi; Vice-Minister and Deputy Director General for International Cooperation in the Netherlands; Ms. Birgitta Tazelaar; Director-General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance at the German Federal Foreign Office, Ms. Sibylle Katharina Sora; and the Executive Director of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Mr. Asif Saleh.

And today, as the world faces the greatest humanitarian challenges in over a generation, we have never needed the CERF more. Everywhere I travel – even if these days my travels are sometimes virtual – I hear stories from real people who get help thanks to the CERF.

I spoke recently to Adama, a 42-year-old widow in Burkina Faso, whose village was attacked by gunmen last year, leaving her husband and other family members dead.

In a place like Burkina Faso, where conflict and displacement are increasing faster than anyone can keep up, the CERF is a critical tool. Quick CERF funding helps humanitarian partners scale up and meet the needs of people like Adama and her children.

Last week we published the Global Humanitarian Overview for 2021. 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection next year. That is a 40 per cent increase compared to what we projected this time last year - almost entirely down to COVID-19.

In 2020, the CERF's value particularly stood out in four areas.

First, thanks to the staunch support of its donors, CERF has seen a consistent increase in funding over recent years. Last year, record contributions brought it close to its \$1 billion target. This enabled CERF to tackle huge humanitarian challenges at a scale never seen before, with unprecedented impact.

The focus was on those places where needs were greatest – places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Second, CERF's COVID response enabled the humanitarian system to respond quickly and effectively to new needs, embracing innovative approaches to do so.

With the pandemic came uncertainty, so the CERF prioritized flexibility. It gave block grants to UN agencies to allow them to target effort where they saw the greatest needs.

When travel shut down, CERF supported the transportation of humanitarian goods and workers to crisis zones.

And when the threat of gender-based violence increased in lockdown, CERF prioritized help for women and girls in its allocations.

Third, a larger CERF has also enabled us to accelerate the agenda on anticipatory action where shocks were predictable and could be mitigated. It funded innovative and anticipatory approaches in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Somalia, based on forecasted climate, hunger and other triggers.

And fourth, a larger CERF has helped achieve results in four consistently underfunded areas of humanitarian response: support for women and girls; people living with disabilities; education; and protection and other help.

So, I thank all of you here who helped support the CERF this year.

Your generosity has helped over 65 million people get food, healthcare, shelter and protection.

Several donors are providing multi-year funding from several donors. That has helped CERF operate at its fullest potential. We look to others to commit multi-year funding, wherever possible.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, and to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, we need to reach the goal we set in 2016, for a billion-dollar CERF.

Thank you.

Draft closing statement by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, at the 2020 High Level Event for the Central Emergency Response Fund

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Thank you everyone for being here today.

My particular thanks to all who contributed so generously to the CERF. Today a total of XX contributors collectively pledged US\$ XX.

This includes XX returning donors. And I am pleased to say we have commitments from XX donors that pledge for the first time.

Your support and engagement are a testament to the CERF's unique position as a fund for all, by all.

It is this solidarity that makes the CERF so unique, and so successful.

We should all be proud of the CERF, and what it continues to achieve. I look forward to engaging with each of you in the year ahead, as we move towards our goal of a US\$1 billion CERF. Your support has never been more important.

Thank you.