

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths opening remarks at High-Level Event for the Central Emergency Response Fund

8 December 2021

Excellencies, distinguished guests and panellists, welcome to the annual High-Level Event for the Central Emergency Response Fund and thank you for being here.

We are here to celebrate CERF's achievements on its fifteenth anniversary, and to recommit ourselves to its successful future.

Over the past 15 years, CERF has saved and protected millions of people when they have needed it the most.

Last year alone, CERF reached close to 70 million people.

It provided 42 million people with health care.

Got food assistance to 16 million.

Delivered water and sanitation to 12 million.

Provided protection for 9 million.

And nutrition support to 4 million.

Most of the beneficiaries were women and girls.

This year you came through, generously providing \$553 million to CERF. As a result, this year we expect to reach our second-highest allocation level in 2021, helping people across 34 countries.

CERF continued to demonstrate its role as one of the humanitarian system's most effective and efficient funding instruments.

It is agile. When an earthquake hit Haiti in August, CERF allocated \$8 million within 32 hours.

CERF responded swiftly at critical junctures of escalating upheaval in Afghanistan and fighting in Ethiopia.

CERF is strategic. In Bangladesh, Somalia and 10 other crises, CERF is helping to steer a system-wide pivot towards anticipatory action to enable people to get ahead of crises so they can protect their assets, feed their children and avoid long-term displacement.

CERF is principled. It was a lifeline for close to 10 million people caught in underfunded crises in 12 countries.

It also funded four critical areas that are consistently under-resourced, including programmes serving women and girls and people living with disabilities, as well as emergency education and protection services.

But CERF operates in a world with ever-deepening vulnerability.

COVID-19 is still sowing suffering by spreading sickness, and deepening poverty and inequality.

Economies and basic services continue to reel from the pandemic.

Prolonged conflicts in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere continue to fester, while conflict worsens in Ethiopia and instability is rife, from Myanmar to the Sahel.

The effects of the climate crisis are devastating the lives of vulnerable people, who face prolonged and repeat droughts, more intense storms and debilitated ecosystems.

These multiple drivers have left us with record numbers of people in need.

In the 15 years since CERF was established, the number of people the humanitarian sector has set out to reach has grown more than sixfold, from 32 million to 183 million.

Recognizing that this massive uptick in needs required a commensurate rise in funding, five years ago Member States committed to a \$1 billion CERF, a promise which was later endorsed by the General Assembly.

However, five years on, we are still far from reaching that goal, even in a year of unprecedented suffering.

Meeting \$1 billion requires everyone to step up.

I am proud – and I think everyone here today should also be proud – that CERF is “a fund for all, and by all.” 130 Member States, private sector and international organizations contribute to the CERF. My sincere thanks to you all.

But at the same time, only 10 donors provide the vast majority of CERF’s resources.

So now we all need to commit to make CERF even stronger in 2022. So many lives depend on the decisions we make here today. I am grateful to you for your support.

Thank you for being here, and I look forward to hearing from you.