

NOTE ON THE ADVISORY GROUP MEETING OF THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND 23-24 OCTOBER 2018



1. The CERF Advisory Group was established by the General Assembly Resolution 60/124 to advise the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, on the use and impact of the fund. The second meeting of the Group in 2018 was held in New York on 23 and 24 October and was chaired by Leni Stenseth (Norway). The Under Secretary-General (USG) and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) Mark Lowcock participated in one of the meeting sessions.

2. In the first session of the meeting, the Chair and the Chief of the Pooled Fund Management Branch (PFMB), Ms. Lisa Doughten welcomed five new members to the Group, including Ms. Hong Liang, Deputy Director-General of the Department of International Economic and Trade Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, China; Ms. Rahmawati Husein, Vice Chair of Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center, Muhammadiyah Organization, Indonesia; Ms. Aissata Kane, Deputy Permanent Observer at the Permanent Delegation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations in Geneva, Mauritania; Mr. Tariq Ali Faraj Al-Ansari, Director of the International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar; Ms. Beverley Warmington, Director Humanitarian, Security and Migration, Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom. The Chair presented the meeting agenda and summarized recommendations and conclusions from the Group's meeting in May 2018.

3. The Advisory Group welcomed a briefing by the PFMB Chief on the use of the fund during 2018. The Branch Chief informed that, to respond to exceptionally high humanitarian needs, CERF had supported life-saving humanitarian operations at a total value of almost \$470 million during the first three quarters of 2018 - the highest amount ever allocated by CERF at this point of the year. The grants have targeted a range of humanitarian crises from the earthquake in Indonesia, the displacement crisis in and around Venezuela and hunger and malnutrition in the Sahel. The Chief also informed that there had been no cases of fraud with CERF funds reported to the CERF secretariat since the previous meeting but upon request of the Group, the CERF secretariat will provide an overview of procedures regarding communication on investigations involving CERF funds during the next Advisory Group meeting. She also informed Members that the CERF secretariat is commissioning three country reviews on the use and impact of CERF funding allocated in response to the regional Venezuelan displacement crisis, the ongoing displacement crises and Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the hurricanes that struck Cuba and the Eastern Caribbean in 2017. Finally, the Chief of PFMB introduced the new Director of the Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division (HFRMD), Lisa Carty. The Director provided a brief description of the new Division and described her vision for humanitarian financing, emphasizing the need for further improvements of the humanitarian system's ability to finance humanitarian action and the need for more systematically financing ahead of imminent disasters. Members expressed appreciation for the update and congratulated the CERF secretariat on this year's Results Report, referring to it as a cornerstone for CERF's resource mobilization efforts and a best practice within the UN system on reporting on results and value added achieved. Members particularly appreciated the fact that this year's edition has been even further improved based on feedback from partners to the pilot report from 2017.

5. In a session on resource mobilization, the Chief of OCHA's Partnership and Resource Mobilization Branch (PRMB), Marcy Vigoda, provided a snapshot of CERF's funding status and noted that projected income stood at roughly US\$498 million for 2018 with the hope that last year's record income level will be exceeded. The Chief of PRMB presented the updated CERF Resource Mobilization Strategy that focuses on deepening CERF's donor base and bolstering CERF's reputation as a highly performing humanitarian financing tool. The discussions focused on peer-to-peer advocacy efforts amongst member states that the Advisory Group members could support, the first ever, High Level Event on CERF during the September meeting of the General Assembly, the December High Level Pledging Event and advocacy efforts that the Advisory Group members could support over the next six months. The group also received an update on a Germany-supported philanthropy initiative for CERF targeting high net worth individuals to further diversify CERF's donor base. The group thanked OCHA for organising the September event and appreciated the Secretary-General's attendance, including for the upcoming December Pledging Event. Agreeing that the focus of CERF advocacy should remain on the value and impact of the fund rather than reaching the \$1 billion target itself, the group offered suggestions on how it could support targeted fundraising and outreach initiatives.

6. In the session on the future of CERF in the context of global humanitarian needs and the fund's \$1 billion funding target, ERC Lowcock emphasized the need to strengthen the humanitarian system by better planning in advance of crises, putting the response plans and funding in place before they materialise, and releasing funds and mobilizing a response as soon as needed. According to the ERC a more systematic support of early action by CERF is necessary and a natural evolution of CERF as the UN's global

humanitarian emergency fund. The ERC underlined that CERF has a key added value in financing early action through its convening power and scale, that can help bring stakeholders around the table to develop coordinated and, where appropriate, joint multi-sectoral responses. The ERC underlined that an anticipatory approach to fund early action is consistent with CERF's mandate and will not require the establishing of a separate window. In the same session, the Group requested further clarifications regarding allocations from the 2nd round Underfunded Emergencies, took note of ERC's decision and encouraged OCHA to ensure extensive and timely communication around every CERF underfunded allocation round.

7. The ERC's presentation was followed by an update by the Chief of PFMB of the ongoing consultative and analytical processes behind the development of an approach for more systematic use of CERF for funding early action. The Chief informed that the CERF secretariat expects to finalize a strategy on how to take an early action approach forward by the end of 2018, and that the strategy will be shared with the Advisory Group and discussed at the next meeting. The Chief also briefed the group on the review and update of CERF's life-saving criteria, agreeing to include a presentation of status and next steps on the process in the next Advisory Group meeting. The session also included a presentation by Ms. Florence Pichon, from the Overseas Development Institute, of initial findings from an ongoing study funded by the UK's Department for International Development on what an anticipatory approach for CERF could look like in practice, i.e. what are the early actions CERF could fund and what implications this would have on the design of an anticipatory approach. The group highlighted that it is important to position CERF within the broader humanitarian financing system. Many members expressed support for CERF moving to support early action, while others cautioned emphasizing that an anticipatory approach must not come at the expense of CERF's core functions supporting rapid response and underfunded emergencies and suggested carefully considering and acknowledging the risks of CERF moving into early action. The ERC reassured the group that the Rapid Response and Underfunded Emergencies windows will remain CERF's core funding functions and that an anticipatory approach will complement and will not detract from these. He also informed that OCHA is not rushing into early action but conducting thorough research in collaboration with experts and ensuring wide consultations with humanitarian partners and that anticipatory approaches will be tested in select pilots to learn lessons and assess value added. It was agreed that more discussions are needed on a number of strategic issues, including the complementarity between CERF and other funding instruments.

9. In a session with the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) from Chad, Stephen Tull, and the Resident Coordinator (RC) from Zambia, Janet Rogan, and members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), examples of the use and impact of funds were presented. The RC/HC from Chad expressed appreciation for CERF's critical role in ensuring early funding for the food insecurity, health and population movement crises across the country. The RC/HC highlighted that CERF continuously has been the first responder to crises in the country and helped fund early actions to new crisis. He further informed that CERF funding is ensuring access for humanitarian actors in the country to otherwise inaccessible areas through UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS). The RC from Zambia described the use of CERF funding for humanitarian needs in the developmental context in Zambia and how CERF was the only rapid funding source available to address the need of refugees arriving from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The RC further highlighted how in-country CERF processes contributed to a strengthening of the leadership role of the RC and supported inter-agency coordination. She also highlighted how CERF's catalytic effect for additional funding is limited in a context without established humanitarian donors.

10. Following presentations by the RC/HCs, IASC members highlighted the relevance of CERF for ensuring timely and coordinated humanitarian responses, with some highlighting CERF's capacity to ensure innovative responses to continuously more challenging humanitarian situations. IASC members also broadly reiterated support to the expansion of CERF's funding target and articulated support for increased early action funding by CERF, while emphasizing that the development of an anticipatory approach must not come at the expense of CERF's core functions.