

NOTE ON THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND ADVISORY GROUP MEETING 8-9 MAY 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 first meeting of the Group in 2018 was held in Geneva on 8 and 9 May and was chaired by Leni Stenseth (Norway). The Under Secretary-General (USG) and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) Mark Lowcock participated via VTC in one of the meeting sessions.

2. In the first session of the meeting, the Chair and the CERF Chief and OIC of the Humanitarian Finance and Resource Mobilization (HFRM) Division, Lisa Doughten, welcomed the Group and thanked members that are outgoing for their role in the Advisory Group. These include Ashraf Shikhaliyev (Azerbaijan), Alexandra MacKenzie (Canada), Seokyoung Choi (Korea), Judy Cheng-Hopkins (Malaysia), Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko (South Africa), Shaima Al Ali (UAE), and Rachel Turner (UK). The Chair presented the meeting agenda and summarized recommendations and conclusions from the Group's meeting in October 2017.

3. The Advisory Group welcomed a briefing by the CERF Chief on the use of the fund from October 2017 to May 2018. The Chief informed that, in order to respond to exceptionally high humanitarian needs, CERF had supported life-saving humanitarian operations at a total value of almost \$250 million during the first quarter of 2018. The increase represents almost a 200 per cent increase from the first quarter of 2017, when CERF allocated some \$140 million. The grants have targeted a range of humanitarian crises from averting famine and disease outbreaks in Yemen to grants targeting people affected by the Myanmar's Rakhine crisis, and refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. The Chief also informed that CERF had received \$152 million from its donors during the first quarter of 2018, and that another \$250 million had been pledged, in addition to an expectation that additional contributions will be announced later this year. Finally, the Chief provided a brief description of the new HFRM Division and responded to the Group's questions regarding the impact of OCHA's restructuring on the CERF secretariat. Members expressed concern that the restructuring might lead to a reduction of the CERF secretariat's capacity to continue its trajectory of improving the fund's operations and results. Furthermore, members requested that the impact of the new structure be measured and reported at the next meeting.

4. In a session focused on operational and policy related issues, the Chief announced that the second annual CERF Results Report would be launched in May, with significant improvement including the ability to quantify the number of people who received CERF-funded support in 2016. An estimated 22.5 million crises affected people benefitted from life-saving assistance funded through 2016 CERF grants, including 15.8 million people that received health support, 4.2 million that received food aid and 3.9 million that received water and sanitation assistance. The Results report confirms the importance of partnerships in implementing CERF funded humanitarian action with an analysis showing that a total of 589 non-UN partners in 45 countries, including 464 national and local partners, received CERF funding in 2016 through partnerships with CERF recipient UN agencies. The Chief also referenced that RC/HCs from recipient countries overwhelmingly confirmed that CERF grants had ensured fast delivery of assistance to people in need, better response to time-critical humanitarian needs, improved coordination among humanitarian community and helped leverage additional resources from other funding sources. The group applauded CERF for the report as a best practice for corporate results reporting and highlighted that the report will be useful for justifying CERF funding with national constituencies. The group suggested broad sharing of the report, and interest in actively promoting it within their governments and on social media. The group commended the important improvements introduced to the report based on feedback on the pilot report launched in 2017, and also provided suggestions for possible further improvements on future versions of the report. The session also included a presentation of plans for 2018 country reviews of CERF's

added value that includes potential reviews in DRC, Cameroon and Chad, and the Caribbean and Cuba. The CERF Chief also gave an update on the process to review CERF's Life-Saving Criteria, and the Group requested to be kept updated. Finally, the session included a brief overview of cases relating to potential fraud with CERF funds in operations of recipient organisations.

5. In a session with ERC Lowcock, external consultant Jock Baker presented the findings from reviews of the added value of CERF for the response to humanitarian needs caused by El Niño. The reviews concluded that CERF support for early action has the potential to mitigate suffering and increase cost effectiveness and recommended systematic financing of early action by CERF. Daniel Clarke from the United Kingdom's Centre for Global Disaster Protection provided a presentation on CERF's potential role in disaster risk financing and the potential for linking insurance to CERF. Following these presentations, the ERC led a discussion on the future of CERF. The ERC noted that CERF has proven its role as a key humanitarian financing instrument and that while there is a need to ensure that the fund is aligned with current humanitarian challenges, it is also of great importance to maintain the unique nature of CERF as one of the most effective humanitarian financing tools. The Advisory Group acknowledged the value and potential cost-effectiveness of anticipatory humanitarian action and underlined that early action is an integral part of CERF's mandate. In the efforts to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance at the earliest possible stage, the group emphasized the importance of building on the successes of the current CERF, while also exploring new ways that can further improve the efficiency of the fund. The group highlighted that it is crucial to position CERF within the broader system of global humanitarian financing. The Group underlined the importance of ensuring that early action funding from CERF does not fund activities that should be covered by development funding or host government budgets. In continuation hereof, the Advisory Group encouraged development of an options paper with proposals on how CERF can be used to fund anticipatory life-saving humanitarian action, both in natural disasters and in conflict situations. The group also advised the CERF secretariat to keep abreast of developments on risk insurance within the humanitarian and development financing system with a view to further review whether new risk insurance approaches could be of relevance for CERF.

6. In a session on resource mobilization, Chief of OCHA's Partnership and Resource Mobilization Branch, Marcy Vigoda informed that CERF in 2017 reached an all-time high funding level of \$514.6 million and at the December High-Level Pledging Conference for 2018 registered pledges of \$383 million, an increase of \$111 million from the year before. The Chief presented the draft CERF Resource Mobilization Strategy for the coming year that is focused on deepening CERF's donor base and maintaining CERF's reputation as a highly performing humanitarian financing tool. The Chief called for increased peer-to-peer advocacy efforts by CERF's top donors and the Advisory Group. External consultant Jon Liden presented the findings of his paper "*CERF Resource Mobilization: Elements to Consider for a CERF Investment Case*", describing key elements for a successful CERF investment case and specifically called for reflection about requirements for ensuring that CERF is appealing to new donors. The group discussed initiatives to secure additional donor support – including a Germany supported philanthropy initiative for CERF targeting high net worth individuals - and whether potential changes to CERF's current operating model facilitated by a higher funding level, could attract new donors to the fund. The group agreed that a strong investment case for CERF already exists and that it is essential to safeguard CERF's current value when considering the possibility of any adjustments to the operating model. In addition, any possible new avenues pursued for mobilising resources should be firmly based on evidence of potential effect. The Group advised that advocacy efforts should focus on results and comparative advantages rather than on the \$1 billion target itself. Finally, the group also noted that the timing of the annual pledging conference in December was not favourable to attract ministerial level participation and recommended a complementary high-level event on the margins of the opening of the General Assembly starting in 2018.

7. In a session with the Resident Coordinator (RC) from Bangladesh and the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) from DRC and members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), examples of the use and impact of funds were given. The RC from Bangladesh expressed great appreciation for CERF's critical role in ensuring early funding for the Rohingya Crisis, as well as CERF's role in encouraging inter-agency coordination. The HC from DRC highlighted that CERF continuously has been the first responder to crises in DRC and that complementary use of CERF and the DRC

Humanitarian Fund has ensured a holistic response to people's need. Both emphasized that UN pooled funds instruments (both CERF and country-based pooled funds) greatly support the RC/HC function. Both also highlighted how CERF serves an important role in helping to ensure funding to clusters that often are underfunded, including protection and gender. The RC from Bangladesh suggested that CERF considers increased flexibility in funding for staffing. Both the Bangladesh RC and DRC HC emphasized that while it is important to ensure that CERF is fit to respond to today's humanitarian challenges, which can require potential changes to the fund's funding modalities, it is of outmost importance that CERF maintains its current functions and success as a fund that kickstarts life-saving humanitarian action, and support to underfunded situations. Following presentations by the RC/HCs, IASC members highlighted the relevance of CERF for ensuring timely and coordinated humanitarian responses, including UNFPA and UNWOMEN that emphasized that the needs of women and girls in emergencies would not be possible to address without CERF funding. IASC members also articulated support for increased early action funding by CERF. IASC members also noted the importance of ensuring consideration of funding for immunization and epidemic containment activities in CERF allocations.

8. In conclusion, the members of the Advisory Group expressed their strong appreciation for the leadership of the ERC with regard to the functioning of the CERF and encouraged the ERC to continue to engage actively with the Advisory Group on the future of the CERF.