

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND - BY ALL FOR ALL

(New York, 3 December 2008): If three more Member States contribute to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) at this week's annual event to be hosted by the Secretary-General, it will mean that half of the General Assembly's 192 members have pledged to the humanitarian fund that was created to help victims of sudden-onset disasters and neglected emergencies in a fast, reliable and impartial manner.

Since it was established as part of broader UN reform in 2005, some 93 Member States have contributed to the Fund, which is designed to help kick start humanitarian response and balance funding for crises around the world.

In less than three years, CERF has reached some impressive milestones. In keeping with its mandate of making humanitarian aid faster and fairer, CERF has disbursed more than \$1 billion for life-saving aid in 67 countries, more than one-third of the Member States. A recent independent evaluation of CERF's performance during its first two years concluded that the Fund has succeeded in becoming a valuable and impartial tool for humanitarian action by accelerating response and increasing coverage of needs.

"This year alone, millions of people in 54 countries affected by both sudden onset and long-running humanitarian emergencies have received life-saving relief with funding from CERF. Many vulnerable people, particularly children, might have succumbed to hunger, malnutrition and disease if we were not able to tap resources from CERF to intervene quickly," said John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. "I strongly urge donors to replenish this crucial humanitarian fund so that we are able to continue to respond adequately to the increasing humanitarian needs," he added.

Perhaps the least heralded part of the Fund's success has been the breadth of support it has received from a range of Member States. Countries from all regions of the world have given--from Azerbaijan to Ecuador, from Mongolia to Nigeria, and from San Marino to the UAE (a full list is available at www.cerf.un.org). Some seventeen countries including Bangladesh, Haiti, Indonesia, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka have been both given to and received from the Fund.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will preside over this year's high-level conference in New York at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 4 December 2008 to encourage Member States to support CERF. Ministers from India and Kenya, among other high level representatives from Member States and other humanitarian partners, will attend the conference, which provides an opportunity to review progress and mobilize resources for the Fund. Interpretation will be available in all UN languages.

Considering that the donor base has increased from 52 to 93 in just two and a half years, going over the 100 country mark at this year's event does not seem out of reach. Any contribution, however modest, can go a long way to help CERF attain its annual funding goal of \$450 million. With the number and intensity of natural disasters on the rise and with intractable conflicts continuing to claim lives, supporting CERF is more important than ever.

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