



UNITED NATIONS

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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ITALY PLEDGES \$1.3 MILLION TO GLOBAL RESPONSE FUND

(New York: 15 May 2007): The Government of Italy yesterday announced a pledge of \$1.3 million for the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The pledge marks Italy's first contribution to the CERF, and brings the total number of Member States contributing to the Fund to 71 with a total of more than \$345 in pledges and contributions for 2007.

Since the Fund's inception, 75 donors, including 71 Member States, Japan's Hyogo Prefecture, Disaster Resource Network (an initiative of the World Economic Forum), the non-governmental organization (NGO) Humanity First, and private donations received through the UN Foundation, have pledged more than \$644 million in total to the CERF. The United Nations expects to reach the CERF target of \$500 million by 2008.

"We are very pleased to have Italy join the CERF donor community, and are grateful for its support of the Fund's life-saving activities," said Margareta Wahlstrom, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. "Italy's ongoing commitment to the United Nations humanitarian reform process is an important endorsement of our efforts to improve the quality, reliability and speed of assistance to those most in need."

To date, the CERF has made \$259 million in total grants for rapid response activities, including for natural disasters, epidemic outbreaks, refugees and displaced populations, and complex emergencies, and \$160 million in grants for underfunded emergencies since its inception. Thus far in 2007, the largest recipient of CERF rapid response is Mozambique, where \$11.2 million has been made available to United Nations agencies supporting the Government in responding to the dual emergency of severe flooding in the Zambezi River Valley and the destruction caused by tropical cyclone Favio. The Democratic Republic of Congo is the largest recipient of underfunded grants from the CERF this year, receiving some \$36 million in funding.

Approved by the General Assembly in December 2005, the CERF seeks to save lives by providing quick initial funding for life-saving assistance and rapid response in sudden onset, rapidly deteriorating, and underfunded emergencies. It is used to help redress the existing imbalance in global aid distribution, as a result of which millions of people in so-called neglected or forgotten crises remain in need, while others benefit from better-funded programmes. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes, manages the Fund on behalf of the Secretary-General.

General Assembly resolution 60/124 (2005) added a grant facility of up to \$450 million to the previous Central Emergency Revolving Fund's loan mechanism of \$50 million. Up to two thirds of the grant facility can be allocated to rapid response to sudden onset emergencies. The other third is available for addressing underfunded emergencies.

The CERF is entirely dependent on voluntary contributions. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) urges more government, private sector, corporate and individual donations to the CERF. United Nations Member States are also encouraged to establish a budget line for annual contributions to ensure the Fund's replenishment. The CERF Advisory Group, which provides periodic policy guidance and expert advice on the use and impact of the CERF, will hold its third meeting from 23 to 24 May 2007 in New York.

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