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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**ADVISORY GROUP COMMENDS PROGRESS OF THE
CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND**

(New York, 24 May 2007:) Today, the Advisory Group to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) endorsed several recommendations to further improve and strengthen the capacity of the CERF to save lives.

During its two-day meeting on 23 and 24 May, the Group addressed the preliminary findings on the Fund's first year of operations as well as proposals to strengthen the effectiveness of the funding mechanism. The twelve-member body met for the third time since the inception of the CERF in March 2006. It was the first time John Holmes, the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), attended its consultations. "The Advisory Group has already proved to be an invaluable tool for the evolution of the CERF, and I am confident it will continue to help us move in the right direction," said Mr. Holmes. "The CERF, as a catalyst for coordination and funding, can transform the way humanitarian business is done, but we still have a lot of progress to make. The Advisory Group plays a key part in recommending how best to move forward."

For the CERF to become an effective emergency tool in the field, donors must increasingly support it financially to reach its \$500 million target by 2008 as recommended by the General Assembly. In addition, the Fund requires sustained and predictable financial support to assist those affected by sudden and ongoing crises. In this context, the Advisory Group noted the importance of funds being additional to current resources available for humanitarian programming.

"The CERF has come a long way in a very short time mobilizing funds from over 70 donors, but more needs to be done to assure that funds are disbursed in a more timely, predictable and equitable manner. The Fund, as an instrument of humanitarian coordination, must increase its cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to broaden partnerships and ensure that it continues to contribute towards an effective humanitarian response", said Marika Fahlen, chairperson of the Advisory Group and Sweden's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa.

As an independent body, the Advisory Group provides periodic policy guidance and expert advice on the use and impact of the CERF. All its members serve in their individual, expert capacities. For their third meeting, Moazzam Malik, Head of the Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department of the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom joined the group, replacing Michael Mosselmans (United Kingdom) for the remainder of his two-year mandate while Toril Brekke, Deputy-Head of the International Department of the Norwegian Refugee Council, has replaced Elisabeth Kraakaas Rasmusson (Norway). The next meeting of the Advisory Group will take place in the fall.

As a result of the generous donations it has received since its launch on 9 March 2006, the CERF has committed \$429.6 million for programmes in 44 countries. On average, the CERF has funded more than one emergency project a day in its first fifteen months of operation. \$268.8 million went for rapid response grants to 35 countries, while \$160.8 million were allocated to underfunded emergencies in 24 countries. Established by the General Assembly in December 2005, the CERF aims to save lives by providing quick initial funding for urgent 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 neglected or forgotten crises remain in need.

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