



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7 February, 2014

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit a self-explanatory letter, dated 4 February, 2014, from the Secretary-General and the attached note on a meeting of the Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/124 of 15 December, 2005, which took place in New York on 4 and 5 November, 2013.

In his letter, the Secretary-General, *inter alia*, refers to the Group members' noting, with some concern, the heavy reliance of CERF on its top donors and emphasizing the need for additional resource mobilization. The Group recommended a revision of the Fund's resource mobilization strategy to include a regional approach and to leverage new partnership and fundraising opportunities in the private sector.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John W. Ashe".

John W. Ashe

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

4 February 2014

Dear Mr. President,

I have the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 60/124 adopted on 15 December 2005 which established the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Advisory Group to advise me on the use and impact of the Fund. In accordance with paragraph 21 of the resolution, I submit a note of the meeting of the CERF Advisory Group, which took place in New York on 4 and 5 November 2013.

As summarized in the note, the Advisory Group expressed appreciation for the ongoing improvements in the performance and management of the Fund.

The Group considered a number of policy issues, including the closure of the Management Response Plan to the Five-Year Evaluation of CERF; recent efforts to improve the quality of narrative reporting on the use of CERF funds; an update on the Performance and Accountability Framework; the risk action plan of CERF; the support to protection activities of CERF and the contribution to resilience initiatives of CERF.

The Group members appreciated the opportunity to interact directly with the United Nations Controller, Ms. Maria Eugenia Casar, on the use of the programme support costs of CERF. They requested the Controller to provide further information about the use and traceability of programme support costs once the new United Nations system-wide enterprise resource planning system (Umoja) is in place.

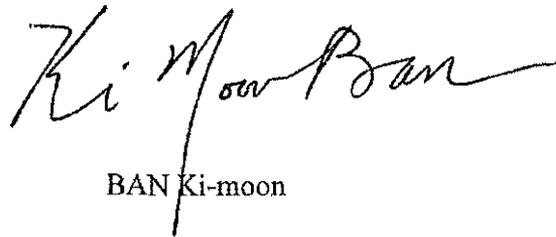
The Group met with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to discuss partnerships with non-governmental organizations and progress in making timely disbursements from United Nations agencies and the International Organization for Migration to implementing partners. The Group recommended that the issue of timeliness of disbursement of CERF funds to implementing partners be brought to the attention of IASC principals for discussion at the next CERF Advisory Group meeting.

His Excellency
Mr. John W. Ashe
President of the General Assembly
New York

Group members noted with some concern the heavy reliance of CERF on its top donors and emphasized the need for additional resource mobilization. They recommended a revision of the Fund's resource mobilization strategy to include a regional approach and to leverage new partnership and fundraising opportunities in the private sector.

I would be grateful if you would bring this letter and its annex to the attention of Member States and Observer Missions.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ban Ki-moon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "B" and "K".

BAN Ki-moon

**Note to the Secretary-General
Central Emergency Response Fund
Meeting of the Advisory Group
4 and 5 November 2013**

Recommendations and conclusions

1. The Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established by the General Assembly in resolution 60/124 to advise the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, on the use and impact of the Fund. The Advisory Group's second meeting of 2013 was held in New York on 4 and 5 November and was chaired by Ms. Catherine Walker (Australia).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Valerie Amos, briefed members on the use and management of CERF from January through October 2013, and she specifically highlighted CERF's critical emergency assistance for Syria. The meeting was also the first opportunity for members of the Advisory Group to interact directly with the United Nations Controller, Ms. Gina Casar, on the use of CERF's programme support costs. Members met with representatives of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group to focus on progress made since their last meeting in May in Geneva regarding timely disbursements from United Nations agencies and the International Organization for Migration to implementing partners and their partnership with non-governmental organizations. The Advisory Group, furthermore, considered key policy issues, including the closure of the Management Response Plan to the five-year evaluation of CERF; recent efforts to improve the quality of narrative reporting on the use of CERF funds; an update on the Performance and Accountability Framework, CERF's risk action plan; CERF's support to protection activities and CERF's contribution to resilience initiatives.

Further to these discussions, the Advisory Group would like to make the following observations and recommendations:

Management

3. The Emergency Relief Coordinator briefed the Advisory Group that CERF had allocated nearly \$416 million to 42 countries and territories from January through October 2013. The Advisory Group expressed its appreciation to the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the CERF secretariat for their management of CERF.

4. Members noted with some concern CERF's heavy reliance on its top donors and emphasized the need for additional resource mobilization. The Group recommended that the Fund's resource mobilization strategy should be further revised to develop a regional approach and to leverage new partnership and fundraising opportunities in the private sector. The members also acknowledged their own role in resource mobilization and advocacy on behalf of CERF, particularly in their own regional

groupings and countries, and encouraged the CERF secretariat to explore opportunities for members to participate further in resource mobilization and advocacy.

5. The Advisory Group welcomed the IASC members' on-going efforts and initiatives to improve the timeliness of fund disbursement to their implementing partners. However, the Group noted that there was room for improvement from all agencies and recommended that the timeliness of disbursement of CERF funds to implementing partners be brought to the attention of IASC principals for discussion with them at a future meeting. In particular, the Advisory Group noted the value of measuring performance against benchmarks and encouraged to establish internal benchmarks for the timely disbursements of CERF funds. Further, the Group requested that the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team consider the best practices from individual agencies which could lead to improvements across the board in the timeliness of disbursement of CERF funds to recipient agencies' implementing partners.

6. The members also questioned IASC representatives about their partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the role that they could play in ensuring that implementing partners recognized the contribution of CERF funds to their activities. This was important for improving visibility and accountability. They also encouraged the IASC representatives to further strengthen the involvement of implementing partners in the CERF prioritization process. The CERF secretariat was asked to compile best practices and lessons learned in order to more accurately measure CERF's impact and added value in the field. The Group encouraged the CERF secretariat to continue strengthening its partnership with IASC members within the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team.

7. The Advisory Group expressed its appreciation for the participation of the United Nations Controller, Ms. Casar, and the time she took to explain to members the use of the CERF programme support costs in a broader context. Upon the Group's request following the May 2013 meeting, the Controller presented a comprehensive overview of the framework regulating the use of programme support costs and a detailed explanation of the use of the portion of programme support costs earmarked for the UN Secretariat's corporate initiatives and joint services. The Group also requested the Controller to provide more detailed information about the use and traceability of programme support costs once the new UN system-wide enterprise resource planning system (Umoja) is in place.

8. Regarding the decision from the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to increase their cost recovery rate from 7 to 8 per cent, the CERF secretariat informed the Advisory Group that the new rate will not apply to CERF under the current legal agreements.

9. The Advisory Group acknowledged and congratulated the CERF secretariat on the successful implementation of the Management Response Plan to the five-year evaluation of CERF, in particular the recommendations directly under its control. It then formally closed the Management Response Plan. Members noted, however, that they would like to revisit some of the related topics at a later stage

and requested that the CERF secretariat regularly update them on any pending issues and include these in CERF's longer-term work plan. The members also reiterated that some of the recommendations fall beyond the scope and control of the CERF secretariat.

10. The Advisory Group welcomed the update on the review of the Performance and Accountability Framework and the country reviews of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan and Yemen to assess CERF's added value in responding to humanitarian crises. A similar regional review of CERF's contribution in response to the food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel, with specific reviews of Burkina Faso, Senegal and Niger was also considered. Members were pleased with the country and regional reviews and their general findings, which confirm CERF's positive impact and added value in responding to humanitarian crises as an early source of substantial funding that enables a quick response, that leverages other donor funding and supports coordination. The Advisory Group encouraged the CERF secretariat to continue actively addressing the issues raised by these reviews and expressed the hope that the reviews would be disseminated widely.

11. The members expressed their appreciation of the findings of the independent review of the CERF Performance and Accountability Framework and noted that the review confirmed it had achieved its main intended objectives and encouraged the CERF secretariat to act on the identified opportunities for improvement. They also acknowledged that the secretariat only recently received the final report, which is still being reviewed. They requested that the final document be shared with them.

12. The members welcomed the introduction of the new rolling reporting schedule for Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator's narrative reporting that synchronizes with the project cycle and requests reports to be submitted within three months of each grant's expiration. They noted that the new system will reduce agencies' reporting burdens, allowing for a more timely review and feedback from the CERF secretariat. It will also simplify the reporting structure, improve the accuracy of the data and increase CERF's transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

13. Regarding the request to substantiate how CERF is funding protection activities, the Advisory Group discussed the analysis provided by the CERF secretariat and acknowledged that 4 per cent is not reflective of the amount of CERF funding allocated to protection activities, which in many instances fall under multi-sectorial activities. The Group encouraged a pragmatic approach that highlights the variety of protection activities already funded by CERF outside of the protection cluster, as well as CERF's support for protection activities within a specific country context. The Advisory Group also discussed CERF's contribution to resilience initiatives, confirming that CERF is playing a small, yet significant, role in facilitating resilience within a specific emergency response by supporting early action activities that meet CERF's life-saving criteria.

14. Regarding the issue of complementarities between CERF and country-based pooled funds, the Advisory Group reemphasized that further harmonization between pooled funds and CERF will improve the overall coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian coordination and action. The members were informed that the guidance note on complementarities is currently being finalized and will be shared with them once the inputs from all pooled fund managers are received and

incorporated. The members also discussed the role of Humanitarian Coordinators in terms of providing leadership and accountability.

15. Regarding the carryover amount raised during the last meeting in Geneva in May, the Advisory Group appreciated CERF's clarification, which noted the importance of having a buffer amount to respond to early requests at the beginning of each calendar year. Furthermore, the end of year financial carryover includes a substantial amount of income resulting from CERF's annual High-Level Pledging event held in December. The members also welcomed the update on the semi-annual CERF risk action plan and acknowledged its importance for risk mitigation and advocacy purposes.

Administrative Matters

16. The Advisory Group expressed its appreciation for the work of its Chair, Ms. Catherine Walker (Australia), and Vice Chair, Mr. Mathewos Hunde Tulu (Ethiopia).

17. The Group confirmed their intention to have their next meeting in Geneva in conjunction with the annual retreat of Humanitarian Coordinators in May 2014. This will give the members an opportunity to interact with Humanitarian Coordinators and to discuss their views and perspectives on CERF, the Fund's impact in the field and their experiences in coordinating and leading humanitarian responses. Other field-based representatives of humanitarian organisation could also be invited.