

7 December 2006

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-Level Conference on the Central Emergency Response
Fund**

Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. Under-Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, for inviting me to address this "High-Level Conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund".

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Egeland for his outstanding performance and dedication to this Organization, as well as for his strong compassion for disaster victims around the world. As he prepares to leave the Organization, I am convinced he will continue to make a great contribution in whichever future role he undertakes.

Today we have come together to express our continued support for an effective international humanitarian response whenever and wherever a disaster strikes. I am pleased to see that such a distinguished group of guests of honour and delegates has gathered here for this important occasion.

The call for a more effective UN response to humanitarian emergencies led the General Assembly in December last year to agree by consensus to establish the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The Fund is a standby reserve readily available to the Emergency Relief Coordinator to deploy resources with no delay in support of comprehensive humanitarian response programmes. By this decision, the United Nations sent a clear message of its commitment to act with common resolve to save lives and alleviate the suffering of the victims of humanitarian emergencies.

The Central Emergency Response Fund was created by all Member States for all Member States. And, I am pleased to acknowledge that during its first year of operation, the Fund has benefited from the broad-based support of 52 Member States, one local government, and one private organization. Although we have not yet met the \$500 million target, I would like to recognize the speed with which most donors made good on their pledges.

I am proud and encouraged that the list of donors includes developed and developing countries alike. Member States have sent out a strong political signal, underlining the importance of

multilateralism, by coming together to assist vulnerable victims of humanitarian crises independent of political and strategic considerations.

Since its launch in March 2006, the CERF has allocated \$230 million to 320 projects in 30 countries. It has proven highly effective in a number of countries; whether in Darfur helping the UN supply food, clean water and health services to 200,000 displaced people, or helping aid workers reach 250,000 people who fled their homes in the North of the Central African Republic. However, if we are to continue with this momentum we are in urgent need to not only sustain CERF annually, but also to ensure that annual funding reaches the \$500 million target.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

By replenishing the CERF, we ensure that humanitarian assistance can and should reach the people that need it the most, when they need it. So any contribution, whatever the size, will help to make a difference to the lives of vulnerable human beings.

Therefore, let us use this opportunity to demonstrate our common humanity. Let us pledge our continued support to the CERF and to the victims of humanitarian emergencies. Let us not fail those who depend on the United Nations to alleviate their suffering and improve their chances of survival in a time of crisis.

Thank you.