



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

18 October 2010

Excellency,

Upon the request of the Secretary-General, I have the honour to attach herewith the enclosed letter on the outcome of the meeting of the CERF Advisory Group which took place in New York on 1 July 2010.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deiss', written in a cursive style.

Joseph Deiss
President of the General Assembly

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



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL



12 October 2010

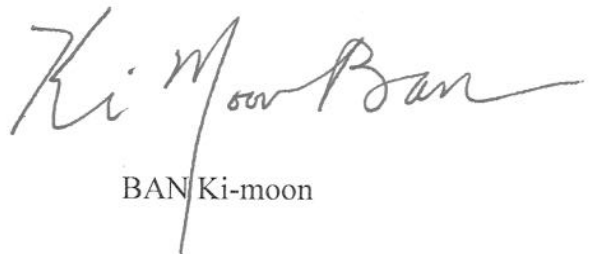
Dear Mr. President,

I have the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 60/124 adopted on 15 December 2005 which established the Advisory Group to advise me on the use and impact of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 21 of the resolution, I have the honour to transmit herewith a note on the outcome of the meeting of the CERF Advisory Group which took place in New York on 1 July 2010.

The note summarizes the key points raised by the Advisory Group during its discussions on both the management of the Fund and its impact on humanitarian operations. The Group welcomed the issuance of the revised bulletin of the Secretary-General on CERF (ST/SGB/2010/5) on 23 April 2010. It also discussed how the Fund addresses several ongoing dilemmas in humanitarian aid and acknowledged the very important role that the Fund plays in consistently promoting early and timely action. The Group praised the high level of support for the Fund among General Assembly members and Observer Missions, of which 120 have pledged or contributed to the Fund, and encouraged the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to broaden and deepen the donor base still further.

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

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



BAN Ki-moon

His Excellency
Mr. Joseph Deiss
President of the General Assembly
New York

**Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund
Note to the Secretary-General
Meeting of 1 July 2010, New York**

Recommendations and Conclusions

1. The Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/124 on 15 December 2005, to advise the United Nations Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, on the use and impact of the Fund. Their first meeting for 2010 took place in New York on 1 July, with eleven Advisory Group members in attendance. The Chair of the Group, Ms. Yoka Brandt (Netherlands), chaired the meeting.
2. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator provided an update on the use and management of the Fund since the Group's last meeting in November 2009. He also reported on progress made in 2010, including the piloting of the draft Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) in Kenya; the issuance of a revised Secretary-General's Bulletin on CERF; and the approval by the Controller of an Umbrella Letter of Understanding between CERF and the United Nations agencies, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Group had the opportunity to discuss the relationship between the Fund and other elements of humanitarian reform with partners from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The Group also discussed the upcoming Five-Year Evaluation of the Fund, which was requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/139.
3. Following these discussions, the Group would like to offer the following findings and recommendations:

Management

4. The Group concluded that the CERF continues to be managed effectively, with improvements made over the years, and encouraged the ERC and the CERF secretariat to make sure that this positive trend is continued. Notwithstanding the global financial situation, the Group encouraged efforts to reach the goal set by the General Assembly of \$450 million in annual funding for the grant element. The Group praised the high level of support for the Fund among General Assembly Members and Observer Missions, of which 120 have pledged or contributed to the Fund, and encouraged OCHA to broaden and deepen the donor base still further.
5. The Advisory Group discussed how the Fund relates to several ongoing dilemmas in humanitarian aid, and acknowledged the very important role that the Fund plays in consistently promoting early and timely action and response to reduce loss of life, by allocating funds to prevent disasters from turning into major catastrophes. The Group raised concerns about the sustainability of funding in situations where the CERF is the main source of income for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners. They also discussed the provision of CERF funding for large-scale and high profile emergencies, where substantial funding from major donors was highly likely. In such cases, it was noted that the timely disbursements of CERF funds can be critical to jump

starting urgent life saving activities, which is then complemented by funds from major donors.

6. The Group welcomed the issuance of the revised Secretary-General's bulletin on CERF ST/SGB/2010/5, on 23 April 2010. The revised bulletin includes the increase of the implementation period for rapid response projects from three to six months and refined language aimed at tightening accountability and improving reporting. The Group took note of the approval by the Controller of an Umbrella Letter of Understanding between CERF and United Nations agencies and IOM, noting that it should help to reduce processing time for CERF applications.

Performance and Accountability Framework

7. The Group reiterated their general support for the Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF), with specific requests that the PAF focus on the three CERF objectives. The PAF should also be rigorous, without being onerous, and use existing reporting processes. Its focus should be on measuring the CERF's added value and its impact on the overall humanitarian response. The Group welcomed the findings of a single country pilot using the draft PAF which was undertaken in Kenya, and which indicated that the PAF would be a suitable instrument for measuring the Fund's performance. The Group endorsed the PAF, pending incorporation of several changes suggested by the pilot evaluation, and encouraged the CERF secretariat to undertake three more country reviews in 2010, as per the terms of the PAF. With regard to other performance and accountability matters, the Advisory Group noted that the Fund has maintained its timeliness in terms of allocating funds and that the CERF application process can and should be used to improve coordination. The Group noted that the narrative reporting from Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators has improved significantly, both in terms of content and timeliness, and has led to sharper focus on the Fund's added value.

Five-Year Evaluation

8. The Advisory Group endorsed the overall approach for the five-year evaluation, and looks forward to seeing the outcome of the evaluation and recommendations on how the Fund can be further improved. The evaluation will provide actionable recommendations through a Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly in its 66th session in 2011. The evaluation will be managed by OCHA's Evaluation and Guidance Section, which is institutionally separate from the CERF secretariat, and will be advised by a Steering Group and a Reference Group. The Group welcomed progress made in forming the Steering and Reference Groups for the evaluation. The Group provided specific comments on the draft Terms of reference for the evaluation, including suggestions on impact, indicators, measuring the quality of prioritization and the use of gender analysis in preparing CERF applications. The Advisory Group asked to be kept informed on the progress of the evaluation and looks forward to reviewing a draft report in April 2011.

Issues with UN Agencies, IOM and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

9. During the meeting with IASC partners, which included representatives of United Nations agencies, IOM and non-governmental organisations, participants acknowledged that the CERF is a fundamental part of the humanitarian response architecture, and a major source of funding for a number of United Nations agencies. The Group noted that the IASC partners were very positive about the role of the CERF as a rapid response mechanism, and about the support for common services as well as agency-specific programming. The discussion centred around the speed of disbursements by United Nations agencies and IOM to NGOs, on ensuring that the upcoming Five-Year Evaluation of the CERF was tightly focused, and on the question of whether CERF funds should be available for preparedness and early recovery. These issues will continue to be of interest to the Group and will be discussed at the next Advisory Group meeting.

Administrative matters

10. The Group discussed the venue for the next meeting and requested the CERF Secretariat to investigate the possibility of holding the next meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. The Group expressed its intention to discuss the following items at the next meeting: the Five-Year Evaluation of the Fund; the rollout of the PAF; the evaluation of the use of the Fund that was conducted by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); and the finalization of the management response matrix to the independent two-year evaluation. The Advisory Group requested the CERF secretariat to provide papers on the efforts to harmonize the CERF with country-based pooled funds; shifts in allocation patterns (by agency, sector and country); and issues related to the transfer of funds to NGOs.