



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

**AT**

**THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON  
THE LAUNCH OF THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE FUND**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS  
NEW YORK  
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Mr Secretary-General, Mr Under-Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen –

It is an honour and a pleasure to address such a distinguished group of guests and delegates. Your presence is evidence of the importance all of us attach to effective international humanitarian response. It is also a sign of much needed awareness of common responsibility and common purpose in today's world.

Last year demonstrated – in lives lost and livelihoods destroyed – just how destructive, indiscriminate and widespread humanitarian emergencies can be. The need for the international community to respond immediately and flexibly became more evident than ever before.

The international community made a start in reforming its approach to humanitarian emergencies when the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182 in 1991. That resolution established the guiding principles underpinning international humanitarian work and the basic framework for coordination of international humanitarian assistance. I remember well, since I was involved in its adoption, and later, as the first Emergency Relief Coordinator, in its practical implementation, both at Headquarters and in the field.

On 15 December last year, the General Assembly fulfilled the will of our leaders at the World Summit by unanimously passing a resolution to establish the Central Emergency Response Fund. By this action, a major step was taken to reinforce and modernize the basic framework laid down in resolution 46/182.

Victims of humanitarian emergencies often desperately need our help within the first few days of the emergency. It simply was not good enough that – until now – they had to wait while the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the UN system asked for donations. Lives were lost as a result. Neither was it acceptable that the scale of response to disasters was determined not by need, but by the media coverage they would generate. Too many people died and suffered because ‘their’ emergency was not on the television screen. Selective solidarity is a stain on the world’s conscience.

With the improved CERF, we have the chance to put these failings behind us. The launch of the CERF today is therefore a great step forward. Through it, the international community can more quickly, reliably and effectively meet the needs of all those who suffer no matter where they are and no matter what scale of the crisis. Its success will of course depend on the level of funding it receives.

I am encouraged to see that the improved CERF has received solid support from so many and such a diverse group of Member States. To date, I understand that the CERF has received pledges from 31 countries including countries affected by or prone to emergencies, as well as traditional and non-traditional donors from all five regional groups.

Such broad engagement and ownership demonstrates the truly global nature and impact of humanitarian crises and reinforces the need to act with common resolve. I encourage all Member States to consider contributions to this fund.

Of course, it is our common responsibility as Member States of the United Nations to ensure that the funds pledged by so many countries are effectively used. This will involve continued active engagement by the General Assembly to review the use and impact of the CERF.

In closing, I would like to thank our OCHA-colleagues under the strong leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr Jan Egeland, for their diligent work since December last year to bring the improved CERF to fruition.

I also want to pay tribute to all the humanitarian agencies and organizations and workers who continue to dedicate themselves to alleviating pain and suffering of those affected by man-made and natural disasters around the world.

Our response to those in need in times of crisis is no less than a test of our common humanity. By our contributions to this fund, we are showing the world that, in the face of suffering, we can stand together in solidarity.