

13 December 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-Level Conference on Central Emergency Response Fund**

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

May I welcome you all to the High-Level Conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Thanks to a package of reforms adopted by the General Assembly in 2005, our capacity to provide emergency relief to victims of disasters, natural or conflict-related, has improved greatly.

As part of this process the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established to speed up the flow of humanitarian resources to jump-start lifesaving relief operations on the ground.

It was created by all Member States of the General Assembly for all Member States. It represents one of the most significant structural reforms of the United Nations in recent years.

In doing so the General Assembly demonstrated its ability to deliver and its shared responsibility to strengthen this organization for the benefit of the global public we serve.

Since its launch on the 9th of March 2006, the CERF has disbursed over USD 595 million for over 737 projects in 59 countries around the world.

This valuable emergency support is the result of the generous contributions of 75 countries and several organisations.

Significantly, among these Member States are several countries which have also been recipients of CERF disbursements.

Today, we gather to express our continued support for the CERF and the United Nations capacity to respond immediately, whenever and wherever a disaster strikes.

Excellencies,

Allow me for a moment to highlight a growing new trend we should all take note of.

The debate on climate change has mainly been focused on mitigation and adaptation to future challenges. However, there are significant affects felt by millions of people right now.

‘Climate shocks’ such as droughts, floods and storms are already among the strongest factors driving poverty.

They are will become more frequent as the planet warms.

But it is the world's poor that face the most immediate and severest costs.

Over the last 100 years about three quarter of natural disasters were climate related. Over the past 30 years, the number of natural disasters has increased threefold.

In 2006, 426 natural disasters affected 143 million people, the vast majority in developing countries.

In the future, progress to alleviate poverty could be reversed by these climate shocks.

Immediate, well targeted emergency humanitarian assistance reduces the long-term impact of these disasters and the threat they pose to our development goals.

This is why emergency humanitarian relief should be a priority for all Member States. And, why the CERF is the global safety net for the worlds poorest and most vulnerable.

Excellencies,

We still have a lot more to do to adequately address future humanitarian needs. Firstly, we should replenish the CERF to finance a variety of emergency life-saving activities around the world.

Immediate capacity and expertise on the ground is much more cost-effective and results orientated than funding larger remedial responses.

Soon, I hope that the number of donors will reach 100 Member States and that total contributions will reach the US\$500 million target.

The broad-based support for the CERF demonstrates that it is a Fund for the benefit of all: just as the responsibility to provide emergency humanitarian assistance must also be shared by all.

This is exactly what the General Assembly resolution establishing the CERF calls for.

Excellencies,

Lastly, I would like to praise the dedication and professionalism of the staff from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

I would also like to note that many Member States have commended OCHA for the open and transparent way in which they manage the CERF and report on its performance.

OCHA and other UN humanitarian agencies deserve our continued support so that they can continue their valuable work.

Today, we can demonstrate our support by ensuring that the CERF is fully replenished to the US\$500 million level set by the General Assembly for 2008.

Thank you very much for your attention.