

4 December 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the 2008 Central Emergency Response Fund**

Delivered by H. E. Ms. Enkhsetseg Ochir, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations

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

I am pleased to convey remarks on behalf of the President of the United Nations General Assembly regarding this conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund. President Miguel d'Escoto is just returning from Doha and regrets that he cannot join us.

December invites us to look back at highs and lows of the year, and to set our goals for the year ahead. In regards to the emergency humanitarian challenges of 2008, the past months will be remembered for the resurgence of conflict and cruelty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the succession of natural disasters that battered China, Myanmar and the Caribbean. It will also be remembered for the economic turmoil that drove the price of food beyond the reach of millions of poor families, and the global financial crisis that continues to send shockwaves through the world's economies, rich and poor alike.

It is also a year when many of us were confirmed in our fears that these natural and manmade disasters will most likely multiply for the foreseeable future. We may, indeed, be witnessing the calm before the storm, one that hits poor populations first and hardest.

All of these emergencies have increased the need for humanitarian assistance, while at the same time reducing the capacity of many to help with financial assistance. They also threaten to undermine hard-won gains toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The General Assembly, during its special high-level debates on the special needs of Africa and the Millennium Development Goals, has resolved that we cannot let this happen. At the Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development, which we just concluded in Doha, we again resolved by consensus that we will work more closely to protect the vulnerable of the world from forces beyond their control.

The Central Emergency Response Fund, created by the General Assembly three years ago this month, is one mechanism for doing that. As you have heard from the Secretary-General Ban and Under-

Secretary-General Holmes, the Fund has been successful in its first few years, disbursing more than one billion dollars for emergency programmes in some 67 countries.

The involvement of CERF in Haiti this year provides a good example of how the Fund meets its dual aims of making its funding decisions both faster and fairer, and providing help to Member States based on need. In recent months, the CERF has responded to the needs of Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, which is being pummeled both by a succession of storms and skyrocketing food prices.

In the aftermath of September's hurricanes, the CERF was one of the first donors to provide funding, giving \$4.3 million to emergency programmes identified by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in consultation with the Government. When the humanitarian appeal, which is still only 41 per cent funded, failed to attract enough funding for crucial agriculture programmes, the CERF allocated some \$5.8 million from a \$100 million reserve set aside by the Secretary-General for the response to the global food crisis.

Haiti demonstrates the success of CERF in another important way: despite its status as a developing country, Haiti has chosen to contribute to the Fund as well. That is why I think one of the best ways to measure the CERF's success is by looking at a map. There you will see that more than one-third of all General Assembly's members have received help through the Fund. Nearly half of all the General Assembly's Members have contributed to the fund, and nearly 20 have both given and received.

I am heartened by the fact that countries from all regions -- from Azerbaijan to Ecuador, from Mongolia to Nigeria, and from San Marino to the UAE -- have contributed to the Fund. It is notable that seventeen countries, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines and Sri Lanka, are both donors and recipients of the Fund.

Each year at this time, CERF has gained more than a dozen new donors. With seven new contributors today, the fund's donor base will pass 100. With just 11 more new donors, the Fund will have doubled the number of contributing countries in its first three years.

I would like to join the Secretary-General in his call for all Member States to make at least a symbolic donation to the Fund. At a time when demonstrations of international solidarity have taken on new urgency, it shows that we can act in concrete ways to assist victims of natural disasters and conflicts around the world. Our solidarity ensures that the Central Emergency Response Fund becomes precisely what the Member States of the General Assembly created it to be: a fund by all, for all.

Thank you.