

## **An Enhanced humanitarian aid system at the United Nations**

### **What is the Central Emergency Response Fund?**

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Recognizing the need for an effective way to distribute humanitarian aid, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was launched in March 2006 at the United Nations. It will be a global emergency fund to provide swift relief to victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts. The CERF is an important reform of the U.N. humanitarian aid because financial support will be “ready to go” for all victims of any potential emergency, no matter where they are.

The Fund was approved by the international community and is dependent on voluntary contributions by member states. It has collected about \$254 million so far and has a goal to reach \$500 million by 2008.

### **Why do we need this new Fund?**

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The Fund is set to transform the international response to disasters and crises, because it has the capacity to provide an immediate and accurate response to unanticipated disasters, when financial support for relief activities is not available from other sources.

In the aftermath of the tsunami in December 2004, the international community witnessed firsthand the global impact of natural disasters and how better coordination between countries can make a huge difference in predicting or warning of these events – and saving lives.

Currently, when a disaster strikes, it can take months to collect money critical for relief operations. In some part this is due to the complex decision-making process in the donors countries. Usually it takes a long time to reach an agreement about the governmental donation for unexpected emergencies. CERF solves this problem by providing permanent funds to respond to disasters immediately and effectively.

The current system is like a lottery. Funds are not always distributed according to the real need and urgency of an emergency. Many times, donors only pledge money to disasters that receive substantial media coverage while ignoring ongoing crises or those disasters that don't make big headlines. CERF will ensure that no disaster is ignored.

### **The new Fund: From lottery to predictability**

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The new fund address the weakness of the former one by providing immediate cash to any emerging humanitarian crisis, independent of existing commitments and appeals. Thanks to this new mechanism, financial assistance for emergencies will be allocated according to the real need of the victims.

# FACT SHEET

The Central Emergency Response Fund provides new and expanded financial support. The new fund provides grants, not loans – which means no country has to worry about whether they can repay the money they need when a disaster strikes.

Furthermore, this new initiative makes it possible for UN agencies to have direct access to these funds so that they are able to implement relief operations within the first 72 hours of a crisis.

## U.S. Position

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During an historic gathering of world leaders at the United Nations last September, the upgrade of the former emergency fund received enthusiastic support from all nations, including the United States. Yet so far, only 36 countries have made contributions totaling only slightly more than 50% percent of the expected amount.

Some of the major donors to the new fund are: United Kingdom (\$70 million), Sweden, (\$41 million), Norway (\$30 million), the Netherlands (\$23 million), Canada (17 million), Ireland (11 million), Spain (10 million), Denmark (\$8 million) and Finland (\$5 million). The United States has pledged \$10 million to the fund.

Not only traditional donor countries contributed to the fund. Several aid-recipient countries such as Sri Lanka (\$10,000), Mexico (\$50,000), Grenada (\$10,000), Pakistan (\$20,000) and Armenia (\$5,000) have also contributed to the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Citizens for Global Solutions applauds the U.S. contribution to the CERF and hope this will be just a first step toward a larger commitment with the newly enhanced humanitarian aid system at the United Nations.

## About Citizens for Global Solutions

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Citizens for Global Solutions envisions a future in which nations work together to abolish war, protect our rights and freedoms, and solve the problems facing humanity that no nation can solve alone. This vision requires effective democratic global institutions that will apply the rule of law while respecting the diversity and autonomy of national and local communities. We work to build political will for our vision in the United States by educating Americans about our global interdependence, communicating global concerns to public officials, and developing proposals to create, reform, and strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations.