

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief
Coordinator Mark Lowcock, remarks at the annual high-level pledging conference
for the Central Emergency Response Fund**

New York, 9 December 2019

As delivered

Secretary-General António Guterres, Excellencies and Ministers, distinguished guests,

Welcome to the 2019 High-level Pledging Event for the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, or CERF.

Thank you all for coming.

This is the third CERF funding event since the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a CERF funding target of US \$1 billion.

I would like to thank the 127 Member States and partners for their vote of confidence in CERF. Fourteen years since its inception, CERF is our shared success.

And who better to tell us that than the people whose lives the Fund has touched.

Earlier this year, I was in Malawi and Zimbabwe, where I met women and men who told me about the help they had received from CERF-funded programmes.

I heard from women in Malawi on how CERF-funded cash assistance saved their lives between harvests.

Belifa and Dolise, who had been unable to put food on the table for their children but can now send them to school to learn with full stomachs. The cash not only respected the women's ability to make their own choices about how to use the money, but also boosted the local economy.

A \$10 million CERF allocation to UN agencies in Zimbabwe is now helping millions, including those living with HIV who had been unable to take critical drugs, to be able to eat more than once a day.

We know that we will face significant challenges in 2020. I fear the outlook for the year ahead is bleak.

Last week, we launched the Global Humanitarian Overview. It sets out the global needs and humanitarian response plans for UN agencies and their partners.

Next year, the UN and partner organizations aim to assist nearly 109 million people - the most vulnerable people on the planet. One person in 45 around the world are expected to need our help – the highest number ever. That will require funding of nearly \$29 billion.

This year, we saw an unprecedented demand for money from CERF.

CERF enabled the humanitarian community to respond to time-critical, life-threatening needs of millions of crisis-affected people across 46 countries with about \$520 million. With that amount CERF has surpassed last year's record of \$500 million allocated.

These funds kickstarted life-saving assistance to people affected by conflict. The allocations helped sustain underfunded responses in countries like Cameroon. CERF supported aid workers to get ahead of weather-related emergencies like droughts, and also earthquakes, cyclones and floods in countries and regions such as Mozambique, Iran and the Horn of Africa.

The Fund helped us respond early to disease epidemics in Yemen and Sudan; and to avoid a further spread of the deadly Ebola virus in countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As we plan for next year, we aim to continue to focus our efforts in two ways that will enable CERF to transform even more lives.

First, we want to make CERF even more responsive. We can do this by getting ahead of crises and taking an anticipatory approach when data and evidence tell us that a high-impact shock is imminent.

Early funding reduces response times and costs and supports better-quality programme design. That in turn, reduces suffering. This year, we started piloting anticipatory action in Somalia in collaboration with partners, using CERF funding to mitigate the impact of severe drought on the people of that country.

Second, we want to reach more people in need. That can only happen if we make sure all our programmes are designed to reach the neediest people. Therefore, earlier this year I asked Humanitarian Coordinators and Resident Coordinators to look at gender-based violence, reproductive health and empowerment, people with disabilities, education for children in long-drawn crises and other protection concerns as they design a response. We know that the most vulnerable people in crises are typically people with disabilities, and

typically women and girls. We need to do a better job to help them because not every part of humanitarian response focuses enough on these groups of people.

I also wanted to let you know that our next round of underfunded emergencies will, thanks to your generosity last year and the beginning of this, total \$125 million. That is the same as the record amount for the underfunded round that we had at the beginning of this year. I hope - and we are finalizing this at the moment – that we will be able to reach even more people in need through those allocations. In particular, we hope to be able to reach those in need caught up in the Syria crisis, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Central America, and in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

At last year’s High-level Pledging event, Member States announced \$439 million for CERF in 2019 – the highest amount ever pledged. In 2018, we also reached the highest funding level for CERF – that’s around \$555 million. I am hopeful that we will exceed both these achievements this year, moving us closer to Member States’ commitment of a \$1 billion CERF.

Most importantly, it will bring us closer towards our commitment to end the suffering of people affected by humanitarian crises.

Thank you very much indeed.