

STATEMENT BY MR. E. AHAMED, MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND AT THE 63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DECEMBER 04, 2008



Mr. President,

India is happy to participate in this High-level Conference on the Central Emergency Response Fund.

The involvement of the UN in the coordination of the response of the international community to emergencies is one of the more important roles that it plays. While Member States have the primary responsibility for provision of humanitarian assistance in response to all emergencies, the UN has a critical role in supporting and supplementing such efforts. The UN is also an important forum for fostering international cooperation to deal with disasters and to coordinate effective utilization of disaster management capabilities. Greater cooperation is required not only in the emergency phase of reacting to disasters but also in relief and rehabilitation, in disaster preparedness, and in setting up and maintaining early warning systems. These all are, and should be, parts of effective disaster management strategies.

Mr. President,

The Central Emergency Response Fund is a key component of these efforts. The Fund has completed two years of existence. It has become, in a short time, a valuable and impartial tool for humanitarian action. We would like the Fund to acquire a greater profile and role in both rapid response to humanitarian emergencies as well as to under-funded emergencies.

The Fund is not only an effective coordination tool but also a symbol of international solidarity. India notes with satisfaction that 79 countries have pledged or made contributions to the fund. The importance that India assigns to CERF is evident from our decision to contribute US\$ 2 million to the fund at its inception. CERF has raised about US\$ 1 billion since then and today accounts for about 5% of annual global humanitarian assistance flows. As a developing country with strong faith in the universality, impartiality and multilateral nature of UN assistance, India would like to see this share increase.

Mr. President,

India has adopted a forward-looking approach to disaster management and mitigation. We have constituted a National Disaster Management Authority, headed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, as well as State Level Disaster Management Authorities. The National Authority has come forward with a new approach to disaster management, moving away from a relief-centric, post event approach, to a holistic, integrated and preventive approach. The focus will be on disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation, based on state-of-the-art technology and environmental sustainability.

India is also committed to mainstreaming disaster management into the development planning process and to creating an institutional and legal framework and an enabling regulatory environment and a compliance regime. It believes that an efficient humanitarian response must give special attention to those who are vulnerable and weak.

Mr. President,

India has taken a lead in promoting regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction in South Asia. We host the SAARC Disaster Management Institute located in New Delhi at the National Institute of Disaster Management. We organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in November 2007, which adopted the Delhi Declaration, paving the way for establishing a Regional Platform for disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. President,

India is deeply concerned by the increasing incidence of attacks on humanitarian personnel and UN premises. India condemns such attacks in the strongest possible terms.

India has also been always forthcoming in extending assistance to countries affected by disasters. We did this after the tsunami and the earthquakes that hit our region in the recent past, even though we were ourselves affected by those disasters.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to state that India stands ready to share its resources and experiences with the international community and to exchange best practices and lessons learnt in the field of humanitarian assistance and disaster management. As a sign of our commitment to strengthening the UN's role in coordinating responses to natural disasters as well as to CERF, I am happy to pledge that India will contribute US\$ 1.5 million to CERF, in three tranches of \$500,000 each, over the next three years.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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