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UN optimistic about donations to pledging session for emergency relief fund



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United Nations humanitarian officials say they are hopeful of raising hundreds of millions from donors for the fund set up to ensure rapid and reliable assistance for people caught up in disasters or conflicts.

The annual pledging conference for the Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)), launched in 2006, will be held tomorrow at UN Headquarters in New York, with donors being asked to meet a target of \$450 million.

Steve O'Malley, chief of the CERF Secretariat, told UN Radio that the fund has been able to meet its targets despite the global economic crisis, thanks to the generosity of Member States, the private sector, civil society groups and individuals. This year about \$400 million has been disbursed by the fund to help some 29 million people across 45 countries, with UN efforts to overcome the Horn of Africa crisis, the drought in Niger and the floods in Central America among the biggest recipients.

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“Despite the difficult economic situation I am really quite optimistic about the level of pledging at the conference,” Mr. O'Malley said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), which manages the fund, is giving a briefing today to Member States and other donors about recent developments and what is expected in the year ahead.

Mr. O'Malley stressed that CERF offers an important service beyond what individual UN humanitarian agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide.

“The reason we think it is important to give money to the CERF is what the CERF does is really provide a coordinated source of funds that is immediately available. And what it does is it enables a country team on the ground, a UN Country Team on the ground, to rapidly assess the needs, to put together a consolidated proposal, get that proposal funded, and get their operations moving.

“What it really does is it promotes a fast and coordinated response, and in that way it is very complementary to other funding mechanisms. So we think it has a very strong impact, an immediate impact, and one where Member States and others who contribute really get bang for their buck.”

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