



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY RUTH ELIZABETH ROUSE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GRENADA**

**ON BEHALF OF  
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY  
(CARICOM)**

**ON**

**AGENDA ITEM 69**

**STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER  
RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL  
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE**

**AND**

**AGENDA ITEM 69 (a)**

**STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN  
ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**\*\*\***

**61<sup>st</sup> Session  
United Nations General Assembly**

**Monday, 13 November, 2006  
New York**

**Please Check Against Delivery**

Permanent Mission of Grenada  
To the United Nations  
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400-K  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: 212 599-0301/Fax: 212 599-1540; E-mail: [grenada@un.int](mailto:grenada@un.int)

Madame President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations, on agenda item 69: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: and agenda item 69 (a): Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

We welcome the Secretary-General's reports on these agenda items and wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his staff for their hard work and dedication, in facing the challenges presented during this past year.

Madame President,

Reports of an upward trend in disasters with vastly devastating effects and the probability that this trend will continue as vulnerabilities increase, are disconcerting. Even more worrisome in this context to the CARICOM Member States, is the reported growing frequency and severity of hydro-meteorological hazards.

Addressing the complexities of disasters and ending the cycles of vulnerabilities necessitate an integrated approach to disaster management that would include, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report A/61/85, disaster planning and preparedness, sustained assistance for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, and the prioritization of risk reduction, as a matter of urgency.

Towards this end, the World Summit Outcome set forth three broad areas to improve the United Nation's humanitarian system. Without prejudice to the importance of progress at an even pace in all three areas, CARICOM has particular interest in the improvement of facilities for rapid access to funds in the initial phases of a humanitarian emergency, and for ensuring equitable response to neglected emergencies, or otherwise chronically under-funded emergencies.

As small island developing states (SIDS) with particular vulnerabilities to hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, our development itself is dependent upon the frequency and magnitude of such weather events. Yet international response to disasters that struck Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and Jamaica, to name a few, in the more recent past had been inadequate. It was therefore in this context that we welcomed the launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund on 9<sup>th</sup> March this year, as a means to ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies and recognized the innovative grant element in the improved Fund.

Madame President,

CARICOM is pleased with the application of the Fund during the first six months since its launch. We note in particular, the immediate disbursement of funds based on appeals for rapid response to situations in Africa, as well as the allocation of funds in under-funded crises.

In order to ensure that the CERF remains an effective funding tool, its funds must be replenished. In this regard, CARICOM Member States urges the transformation of pledges into firm funding commitments.

Secondly, it is important to recall the purpose of the CERF as a mechanism of last resort and the complimentary role it plays to humanitarian appeals mechanisms and emergency funds by individual agencies. In this regard, CARICOM notes that the Fund has been able to complement other humanitarian funding arrangements, especially with assistance to the World Food Programme (WFP); the Office of the United Nations High-Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the International Organisation for Migration (IOM); the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the World Health Organisation (WHO); the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and other entities, in filling un-met needs and supporting life-saving programmes. Consequently, in light of the role of the Fund, as

stated in the report of the Secretary-General, donor funding to the CERF must be additional to donors' response to emergency funds and to appeals from agencies.

Madame President,

CARICOM Member States take this opportunity to recall the important function of the Advisory Group, as established pursuant to resolution 60/124 to provide advice to the Secretary-General on the use and impact of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). We commend the Advisory Group's work thus far and note their report of 12 October 2006, on the use and management of the CERF. CARICOM also endorses the Advisory Group's recommendation that Member States make every effort to achieve as soon as possible, the \$500 million target established by the General Assembly and welcomes the advocacy role the Group intends to undertake for the early attainment of that target. CARICOM further encourages the highest level of participation, as possible, at the forthcoming donor conference for the Fund on 7 December 2006.

Madame President,

In 1991, CARICOM Member States established a disaster management programme to coordinate disaster response and management at the regional level.

The functions of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) include, providing information to interested organizations on disasters affecting the region; disaster mitigation; establishing and maintaining, on a sustainable basis, adequate disaster response capabilities among CARICOM States; and, mobilizing and coordinating disaster relief.

CARICOM Member States appreciate the ongoing support of the international community with respect to disaster mitigation. We make particular mention of the recent donation by the Government of Turkey towards this regional initiative, in the sum of US\$400,000.00 to CDERA for the support of the wider comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) programme in the region. This donation is timely, as it brings

flexibility in supporting gaps in CDM resources and will be utilized to assist country programming, among other activities.

We also welcome the conclusion of a Financing Agreement for Institutional Support and Capacity Building for Disaster Management in the Caribbean, between the European Union and Cariforum. The EU3.4 million project is intended to strengthen and increase CDERA'S effectiveness and improve its coordination within the region; review and revise existing disaster management legislation with the view to establishing appropriate legislation where needed; set up and support national awareness and management campaigns in collaboration with government agencies, NGOs and other parties working in this area; increase the use of ICTs for emergency planning, thereby making comprehensive disaster management programmes more effective, and its capacity enhanced for management and related teaching and research through exchange studies and other research in this field.

CARICOM believes that the assistance rendered by this financing agreement will doubtlessly serve not only to strengthen CDERA, and by extension the human resource capacity of the Region, but moreso to underwrite our economic and social development.

Madame President,

CARICOM is well aware that the future success of the Fund is dependent on the will and support of member states in increasing their contributions in order to meet the three-year target of \$500 million endorsed by the General Assembly. As the theme for the 61<sup>st</sup> session reminds us, "*Implementing a Global Partnership for Development*", we must all work together and support each other in all areas possible.

Thank you Madame President.

## **Background Note:**

The Prime Minister of Grenada represented the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at the launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

Donations have been made by three CARICOM Countries so far:

Antigua & Barbuda

Grenada

Trinidad and Tobago

Ambassador Rouse holds responsibility within the CARICOM Caucus of Permanent Representatives in New York for Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Preparedness.

CARICOM Member States are encouraged to participate in the high-level donor conference on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2006, and contribute to the fund.

(copy of Press Release issued following the participation of the Prime Minister of Grenada is attached for ease of reference)

### **PRESS RELEASE**

36 Donors have pledged \$256 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund launched today at United Nations Headquarters in New York, by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. The Right Honourable Keith C. Mitchell, who represented the Caribbean Community at the launch, said he was pleased at the steps being taken by the international community and joined the UN Secretary-General in welcoming the new fund.

In addressing the gathering, which was attended by several member states including Ministers from the United Kingdom, India, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway and Canada, the Grenadian Leader said that the Caribbean region was among the regions in the world most vulnerable to natural disasters and that the survival of the economies of the region was dependent on the frequency and magnitude of these events.

The Prime Minister used the opportunity to paint in graphic detail, a picture of the state of destruction in Grenada, following the passage of Hurricane Ivan. Mention was also made of Guyana and other Caribbean Islands which were affected by disasters in 2004 and 2005.

The Prime Minister lamented the fact that there was a very poor response to the appeals for assistance launched by the United Nations in the wake of these disasters. "It should be pointed out that the need for humanitarian assistance is a perennial problem for developing countries. As like other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Caribbean rarely receives the attention of the international media".

The Fund has three main objectives:

- Promote early action and response to save lives;
- Enhance response to time-crucial requirements based on demonstrable needs;
- Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in under-funded crisis

The United Nations agencies and their implementing partners will be able to access the fund within 72 hours of the crises, enabling more lives to be saved in the earliest moments of a disaster when more people are at risk.

The Prime Minister also met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and updated him on the reconstruction process in Grenada and the State of Disaster Preparedness in the region.

Dr. Mitchell later joined Mr. Jan Egeland, Emergency Relief Coordinator, at a Press Conference, where the fund was further explained.

Prime Minister Mitchell met with the CARICOM Caucus of Permanent Representatives in New York at a Luncheon event hosted by the Permanent Representative for Grenada to the United Nations, HE Ruth Elizabeth Rouse, who serves as the focal point for natural disasters among the group.

**Permanent Mission of Grenada to the United Nations  
New York**

**March 9, 2006**