

**Further Details on US \$2 billion contribution to UN Programs.** By Helen Murphy, Devex Newswire, 15 Jan 2026  
**‘Better than zero’**

In the final days of last year, **the United States pledged \$2 billion to the United Nations** through 2026 to respond to humanitarian crises in 17 countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Syria, and Sudan. It’s a small slice of what the U.N. says it needs — but [it will constitute a shift in the U.N.’s balance of power](#) among its humanitarian agencies.

Under the deal, U.S. humanitarian funding **would increasingly flow through pooled funds** managed by the U.N.’s emergency relief coordinator, **Tom Fletcher**, giving U.N. humanitarian coordinators on the ground more say over how money is spent. Major agencies such as the [World Food Programme](#), [UNICEF](#), and the [UN Refugee Agency](#) would have to compete internally for shrinking resources.

“The US Government welcomes these ambitious reform efforts and aims to support them to ensure that a greater proportion of humanitarian funding is allocated to frontline life-saving work — and less is squandered on overhead, bloat, and non-core activities,” according to a confidential memorandum of understanding signed by **Jeremy Lewin**, senior U.S. official for foreign assistance, humanitarian affairs, and religious freedom, and Fletcher, who is also the undersecretary-general in the [U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#).

“**This \$2 billion is, we hope, not the end**, but only the beginning of what’s a partnership,” Lewin says. “This is not our full year budget, and it is not the entirety of our humanitarian assistance budget.”

[In a release](#) from the [U.S. State Department](#), **the message to the U.N. was explicit: “Adapt, shrink, or die.”** Some advocates were cautiously relieved, while others warn of the risks, writes Senior Global Reporter Colum Lynch. “It’s better than zero, and I’m generally a fan of pooled funds,” says **Jeremy Konyndyk**, president of [Refugees International](#). But he warns: “If this is it, it’s a catastrophe.”

**For now, the money is a test** — of whether the U.N. can deliver reform, and whether the U.S. is serious about rebuilding a humanitarian system it has already taken apart.

**Exclusive:** [Inside US-UN plan to remake funding for humanitarian crises](#)