

Building Climate and Disaster Resilience for African Development: Remarks by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim

June 2, 2013

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Climate and Disaster Resilience event
Yokohama, Japan

Transcript

Dr. Kim: Thank you very much, your Excellency, Dlamini-Zuma. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, and especially Prime Minister Abe, last fall during the annual meetings of the World Bank I had the opportunity to visit Sendai and I was deeply moved by the scale of the suffering that the people experienced. But I was even more moved by the fact that everyone there, and especially the Japanese authorities, kept stressing to me that the most important thing to them was that they wanted to help other countries, especially poor countries, knowing that so many countries would not be able to respond in the way that Japan had responded.

So for me it was an indication of something very powerful, that I think you can tell the greatness of a country and a people when they're able to respond to disaster and untold suffering by thinking of others. I want to congratulate you and the Japanese people for working so hard to help others to deal with disaster.

[Applause]

Dr. Kim: As many of you know, we at the World Bank have two main goals. The first is to end poverty by 2030 and the second is to boost shared prosperity, meaning making sure that everyone can reap the benefits of economic growth, especially the bottom 40 percent of any society. These goals are very ambitious, but achievable and Africa holds the key. Africa will be one of the most important engines of growth of the future. But with its population growth, rapid urbanization and environmental pressures, it's also extremely vulnerable to the impacts of disasters and climate change. This applies to all regions of this diverse continent in different ways.

Protecting African development by building resilience will determine how successful we are at ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity. This is because disasters have pervasive impacts, both direct and indirect. Over the last 30 years developing countries have suffered an estimated \$1.2 trillion in damage and losses from disasters. We know that this figure is under-estimated in fact. It doesn't include the cumulative impact of smaller events affecting communities on a recurrent basis.

We all know that it's the poor and the vulnerable - women, children, those recovering from the impact of conflicts - that bear the brunt of disaster impacts. They're not empowered to protect themselves and often live in fragile environments under fringes of settlements and they do not have the luxury of safety nets like savings and property. This inequity, coupled with increasing frequency of climate-related disasters, can push people in entire countries deeper and deeper into poverty. Again, if anyone doubts the reality of climate change and the fact that it will lead to increasing numbers of extreme weather events, just look at the state of Oklahoma in the United States today, which has suffered historic, unprecedented tornadoes in succession.

Take droughts, for example. We usually don't think about the domino effect of drought. But as a medical doctor, I can tell you that the relationship between climate change and severe negative outcomes for children is very clear. Droughts reduce agricultural output, increase food scarcity, and the direct consequences on a child's nutrition and development are clear. She may suffer from stunting. She may be taken out of school due to more urgent concerns and put to work. Therefore, drought with its connection to agriculture and stunting can have a direct impact on the prospects of future development of under-cutting fundamentally the ability of countries to invest in the human capital that will drive the growth of the future.

For far too long, the donor community has taken a reactive approach to disasters. We haven't done enough to support countries in their efforts to build resilience by investing in

preparedness and prevention. And I want to give you one very concrete example. In 2002 faced with impending floods, Mozambique requested US\$4 million from donor countries to help prepare. It received maybe about half that amount but after the floods struck the same donors gave Mozambique more than US\$100 million and pledged more than US\$450 million for recovery and reconstruction.

Things are starting to change. The last time I was here of course we hosted the Sendai Dialogue and it's clear that governments are now focusing much more on shifting toward what we're calling a culture of resilience. At the World Bank we're not only changing the way that we think though, we're changing what we do. We've doubled our investments in disaster risk management, again with the strong support of the Japanese government, and we now invest on average \$2.3 billion per year. We're putting disaster and climate resilience front and center and we've committed to integrating risk considerations in everything that we do.

In our work on cities we need to make sure that fast growing cities are properly designed so they don't lock in high rates of carbon emission or put people at further risk of disaster. In our work in agriculture we have to foster food security and reduce vulnerability. In our social protection work we need to ensure that households have access to safety nets like insurance when disasters strike. To do all this we must work across sectors. We must work between the public and the private sector and we must build resilience in all countries in Africa across those sectors.

At the end of the day, resilience is about development and development is about resilience. One cannot exist without the other. Now it's my great honor to introduce one of the greatest champions of the battle against climate change in the world today, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, who's been playing an absolutely critical role in bringing the entire multi-lateral system together to fight climate change. Secretary-General. Thank you.