Remarks by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim at the Toward Universal Health Coverage by 2030 Event

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World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim
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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Margaret, for your leadership and for our great partnership with WHO.

As the Secretary-General reminded us, there are just 629 days until the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals.

The World Bank Group remains deeply committed to helping countries push as far and as fast as possible toward all of the goals. Yet despite all our best efforts, there will be unfinished business when 2015 ends.

Too many people will be dying from preventable causes because they lack access to essential, quality care; or because they can’t afford to pay for the care they need.

So as UN member states come together to forge the post-2015 development framework, we must keep a few things in mind:

The development landscape is changing. Between now and 2030, about half of today’s low-income countries will graduate to middle-income status.

Not only that, but the burden of disease is evolving – including the alarming spread of chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.
We must build on the progress made through the health MDGs and work together to set goals that are universal and based on the principle of health equity for all.

We need a bold health goal for 2030 that encompasses BOTH the health outcomes we want AND the path to get us there.

We now have the evidence that we can end preventable maternal and child deaths. Let’s have the courage to have a goal to do it.

We have the evidence showing us how we can significantly reduce deaths and disability resulting from chronic diseases. So let’s have a goal that will help us scale up those interventions.

And we also have a growing body of evidence that the most equitable and sustainable way to achieve the health outcomes we all want is through Universal Health Coverage. Let’s have a goal that will make it happen by 2030.

Countries like Japan, Thailand, and Turkey have shown the promise of Universal Health Coverage for their people. And a growing number of countries like Myanmar, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Kenya, South Africa, and the Philippines have made Universal Health Coverage a top priority. They’re mobilizing resources and pursuing reforms to turn Universal Health Coverage from a slogan to a reality.

Thanks to our collaboration with WHO, for the first time, we now have two time-bound targets for Universal Health Coverage. These targets will allow us to chart progress, both in scaling up equitable access to essential health services, and in preventing poverty due to out-of-pocket payments for health.

These targets can be applied to all countries, rich and poor, as envisioned under the Sustainable Development Goals.

Time-bound targets for universal coverage in the post-2015 framework will drive policy and program choices that lead to better health -- such as investing in strong, front-line primary care that is accessible to the poorest and most marginalized communities.

Good primary care delivers the essentials like antenatal care, skilled birth attendants, child vaccines, blood pressure and diabetes monitoring, and other interventions that prevent health crises and keep health care costs from escalating.
We also know from the Lancet Commission on Investing in Health, chaired by Larry Summers, that investments in health deliver great economic returns. Nearly a quarter of the growth in full income in low- and middle-income countries between 2000 and 2011 was due to better health outcomes.

Universal health coverage is our aspiration, a progressive pathway that will save lives, increase economic growth, and help millions of people lift themselves from poverty.

Some ask whether universal health coverage by 2030 is possible. But a decade ago, no one thought it was possible to get 3 million people on anti-retroviral treatment, and today there are 10 million and counting. Unwavering political commitment, clear progressive goals, and measurable targets drive the change.

This afternoon’s session builds on the terrific morning panels.

We heard about countries -- at different stages of reform -- that are making progress toward universal health coverage.

We learned about innovative approaches to expanding access to essential health services, such as results-based financing.

We heard about efforts to mobilize resources to scale up key interventions, like child nutrition and immunization; and learned about the importance of countries and development partners agreeing on targets to track performance.

This final panel will look ahead at challenges and opportunities to get more health for the money -- and more money for health.

Larry Summers will tell us about the powerful findings from the new Lancet Commission on Investing in Health.

Mike Bloomberg will talk about how public policy interventions can drive healthier choices.

Minister Ngozi will describe how Nigeria has made universal health coverage a priority, and is leading the way forward.

We’ve invited these economic and development leaders because this is a development conversation.
Investing in health -- and achieving universal health coverage -- will help us achieve the development goals to end extreme poverty by 2030 and boost shared prosperity. We have an unprecedented opportunity to achieve these goals and change millions of lives for the better.

As it says behind me – it’s time to “Take On Universal Health Coverage.”

Thank you very much.