Statement by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim upon Meeting with French President Francois Hollande

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Paris, France

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PARIS, November 8, 2013—World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim today issued the following statement upon his meeting with French President Francois Hollande:

(Translated from French)

"Mr President of the Republic, Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman,

"It is a great honour for me and for the World Bank Group to welcome the President of the Republic to our Paris premises this morning.

"I would first like to express my most sincere condolences to the families of Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon, the two RFI (Radio France Inter) journalists killed in Mali last week.

"I would also like to express my solidarity and my respect for all the journalists who risk their lives every day to give a voice to those who otherwise would not be heard.

"I was particularly moved when I met the French military, because at a risk to their own lives, they had taken part in the liberation of the part of Northern Mali that I was visiting."
"The relationship between France and the World Bank dates back more than 60 years. You were one of the founding members of our institution, and in 1947 you were one of the first countries to benefit from a loan from the World Bank; this was the post-war period and you were reconstructing your country. And today is the first time that we have the privilege of welcoming the Head of the French State.

"Mr President, your long standing support for this sub-region has been a source of inspiration and motivation. The important interventions of your representatives within our organisation have also allowed us to better grasp the very close links between security and development.

"This trip allowed me to better appreciate the challenges that face the populations and leaders of the Sahel, and to be even more convinced that by working together we can bring durable solutions to the problems experienced by these populations. I am returning to Washington with a strong sense of hope and optimism. "If I may, I'd now like to speak in English.

(Speaking in English)

“Given France’s important role in raising international awareness of the challenges facing the Sahel region, I am particularly honored to have had this opportunity to meet with President Hollande today. I briefed him on the visit to the Sahel that I undertook with the UN Secretary-General, the African Union Commission Chair, the European Commissioner for Development, and the President of the African Development Bank. This trip, which was an unprecedented joint mission led by the Secretary General, allowed us to engage on the important and related issues of peace, security, and development with the leaders of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. One of the conclusions we drew from our visit is the need for a coordinated and regional approach to tackling the major development challenges of the region.

“During the trip, the World Bank Group committed $1.5 billion dollars in new regional investments over the next two years. This is in addition to significant existing country programs. These additional funds will support major regional development priorities such as social safety nets to help families withstand the worst effects of economic adversity and natural disasters. It will also allow us to invest in the infrastructure needed to spur growth and stability. We pledged to increase our work on pastoralism and irrigation in order to
boost agricultural productivity and create opportunities in rural areas. The social and economic empowerment of women will be an integral part of our work; we need to harness the energies of all citizens -- especially women -- to build a secure and prosperous future for the region.

“The World Bank Group’s funding will create more hydropower and other sources of clean energy to greatly expand irrigation and transform agriculture; protect and expand pastoralism for more than 80 million people living in the Sahel who rely on it as a major source of food and livelihoods; expand health services for women and girls; and improve regional communications and connectivity between countries.

“Our package also includes $300 million dollars from the IFC, the Bank Group’s private sector arm, to finance the private sector development needed to create good jobs and help bring stability to the region. This funding is aimed at leveraging billions of dollars in additional investment. The Bank Group’s political risk insurance arm, MIGA, will also provide $585 million dollars in guarantees over the next year for a gas project in Mauritania that exports power to Senegal and Mali.

“Our scaled-up commitment to the Sahel is made possible by the support of all our donors that come together to support the poorest countries under our fund for the poorest, IDA. IDA is a rare international coalition, bringing together developed countries, emerging markets and developing countries in support of the development priorities and plans of low income countries. We very much appreciate France’s commitment to international solidarity and its traditionally strong support for IDA.

“The people of the Sahel have struggled too long with too little economic growth. They have endured a harsh climate and periods of famine; they have suffered the intricately linked curses of high fertility rates and the world’s highest number of maternal and child deaths. But this is not their preordained fate. For too long, we have failed the Sahel, and maintained aspirations for it that reflect our inability to see past the very real challenges of the region. The people of the Sahel do not have low aspirations for themselves. When I was in Timbuktu a few days ago, a diverse group of people all had the same message: They want just what all of us want -- a good job, a good education, access to quality health care and hope for a better life for their children. Those of us in the international community must raise our aspirations for the region and redouble our efforts to demonstrate our solidarity through effective, pragmatic support.
“Mr. President, your personal commitment to this region has ignited great hope and we must now follow through and keep our promises to the long suffering people of the Sahel. Under your leadership, France has played a key role in bringing stability to most of Mali, which has helped the entire region. The World Bank Group and France share a commonality of purpose in the Sahel. Our work programs are complementary. France has shown great leadership in its focus on the linkages between development and security, on improved governance, and on building institutions for the future. Importantly, France is encouraging strengthened cooperation between the countries of the Sahel and the Maghreb, a linkage to which we also attach great importance. Cooperation will be important also to enable the countries of both regions to tackle organized crime, which has undermined security and the livelihoods of their people.

“As I assured President Hollande this morning, the World Bank Group looks forward to working in partnership and cooperation with France, and benefitting from its tremendous technical expertise and long history of engagement and investment in the region.”

“Merci Monsieur le President, Merci pour tout ce que vous avez fait pour les populations du Sahel.”