“Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It’s a great pleasure for me to be here tonight, and to join with all of you in driving forward progress on the Every Woman Every Child Initiative. We at the World Bank strongly support this program, because children’s and women’s health are absolutely crucial to our core mission of expanding prosperity and ending poverty. Mr. Secretary-General, thank you for your leadership of this critical effort.

Poor health and high out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures are among the leading causes of poverty. And access to quality, affordable healthcare is not only about making people healthier, but is also a necessary underpinning for creating productive opportunities and decent jobs, and ultimately for sustaining economic development.
That’s why we at the World Bank Group have been stepping up our investments in children’s and women’s health.

Over the past 5 years, the World Bank has committed more than $1.4 billion dollars to improve child health, and nearly an additional $1 billion for reproductive and maternal health programs.

At the 2010 MDG Summit, we committed more than $600 million over 5 years in results-based financing programs to address the challenges of high fertility, poor child and maternal health and nutrition in 35 highest burden countries. Two years later, we’re well on our way to fulfilling this pledge, with $368 million either already committed or in the pipeline.

But we must do more to accelerate progress. Too many women and children continue to die needlessly, lacking access to the basic, quality, affordable health care they need and deserve.

That’s why tonight I am announcing that the World Bank will establish a special funding mechanism to enable donors to scale up their funding to meet the urgent needs related to Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5. We hope to do this by leveraging the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank’s fund for the poorest. We are committed to finding the financial and human resources needed to address these incredibly important issues. We will be talking with our IDA shareholders and other interested donors and partners in the coming weeks to agree on the best way to do this, together.

We don’t just need more money for health – we also need to achieve better outcomes for the money we’re spending. At the World Bank, we’re pursuing this goal in three ways:

First, we’re increasing our focus on reproductive health, because we know this is critical for achieving broader health outcomes. Through our Reproductive Health Action Plan, 70% of all World Bank health projects in countries with high maternal mortality and/or high fertility now address reproductive health. We’re helping ensure a continuum of care from family planning to pregnancy and safe delivery, to post-natal care, newborn and child health.

Second, we’re designing innovative programs that link financing to results, producing dramatic gains in both access and quality of health care for poor women and children.
To give just one example, in Burundi, results-based financing has led to a remarkable increase in reproductive health services in just one year, including a 25% rise in births at health facilities, a 20% increase in prenatal consultations, and a 27% increase in family planning services.

Third, and most importantly, we’re helping countries put in place strong health systems.

To achieve outcomes at scale, you can’t just look at the inputs – you need to focus on systems. Consider, for example, everything it takes for a mother to safely deliver a healthy baby that can thrive. It starts with the mother having the right information and access to affordable family planning. Then you need nutritious food and vitamins and ante-natal care, and an equipped and accessible clinic with trained health workers to deliver her baby safely. And you need to ensure that she and her baby receive necessary vaccines, medicines, and affordable basic health care.

It takes all of these things and more working together in a strong health system – a network of people, resources, and information that makes the difference between life and death.

And a strong health system requires investments beyond the health sector. We also need to think about infrastructure, water and sanitation, education systems, and labor markets: All play a role in delivering health outcomes.

Finally, as donors and development partners, we have a special obligation to harmonize our aid efforts and remove any bottlenecks to effective service delivery. I am committed to deepening our collaboration with our multilateral and bilateral partners to ensure we’re working together as effectively as possible to support country priorities and produce results.

What will it take for all women and children live healthy lives? I’ve talked about some of the things we know are working - but we also need new ideas. That’s why we’ve launched a global campaign to ask people what it will take to end poverty. Check it out on Twitter at hashtag #whatwillittake and tell us what you think.

Thank you and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to ensure that every woman and every child can survive and thrive.”