

World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim's Speech at World Health Organization Assembly: "Poverty, Health and the Human Future", Geneva, Switzerland, May 21, 2013

Mr. President, Excellencies, colleagues and friends:

We stand at a moment of exceptional possibility. A moment when global health and development goals that long seemed unattainable have moved within our reach. But we also stand at a moment when dangers of unprecedented magnitude threaten the future of humankind. A generation must rise that will drive poverty from the earth. A generation must rise that will bring effective health services to every person in every community in every country in the world. **We can be** that generation.

Yes, I'm optimistic. I'm optimistic because I know what has already been achieved. In 2011, global average life expectancy reached 70 years, a gain of six years since 1990. In the same period, the global child mortality rate has fallen by 40 percent. These are just two of the milestones of recent progress. But I have other reasons to be optimistic. First and foremost, I know that your organization is guided by the right values. Secondly, many countries around the world are actively reforming and improving their health systems. And thirdly, these developments are closely connected with renewed efforts in the global fight against poverty.

Last month, the organization I lead, the World Bank Group, committed to end absolute poverty worldwide by 2030. For the very first time in history, we've set an expiration date for extreme poverty. But to free the world from absolute poverty by that date, countries must ensure that all of their citizens have access to quality health services at affordable prices. This means making sure that no family, anywhere in the world, is forced into poverty because of health care expenses. By current estimates, worldwide, health spending forces 100 million people into extreme poverty every year, and inflicts severe financial hardship on another 150 million. This is an unacceptable.

My friends, the question is **not** whether the coming decades will bring sweeping change in global health, in economic development and in the fundamental conditions of our life on this planet. Change will come – it's happening now. The issue **is** whether we will take charge of change: become its architects, rather than its victims. Because the gravest danger is inaction.

To conclude, WE MUST BE the generation that breaks down the walls of poverty's prison, and in their place builds health, dignity and prosperity for all people. Thank you.

