Statement by Jim Yong Kim, President, World Bank Group
Following the United Nations’ Chief Executives Board Meeting on Ebola

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As Prepared for Delivery

Good afternoon. I’m pleased that we had the opportunity today to bring the leaders of the United Nations system together, to assess the status of the global response to the Ebola epidemic, and to work toward a unified approach on the ground in West Africa.

This is a pivotal moment in the world’s worst ever Ebola epidemic. There’s clear evidence of areas of progress, particularly in Liberia, where new cases have declined significantly. International support is making a difference. But there’s also evidence that is very worrisome, such as the increase in infections in Sierra Leone and the spreading of the outbreak to Mali.

And our goal will be extraordinarily difficult: We must get to zero cases. Ebola is not a disease where you can leave a few cases and say you’ve done enough; look what happened in the early days of this epidemic, when it fell in Guinea and then exploded into Liberia and Sierra Leone.

A key element in getting to zero cases will be to invest much more in effective health systems. These countries need community-based care facilities with well-trained health workers and strong triage, diagnostic, treatment and referral capabilities. They must be able to do the kind of extensive contact tracing of infected patients that enabled Nigeria and Senegal to get to zero cases. Doing so will require even more resources, more discipline, and more coordination among the affected governments and international agencies.
Even as we focus intensely on the immediate health response, we also must begin planning to help the affected countries back on the road to economic recovery and development. As soon as possible, we need to get children back in school, farmers back in their fields, businesses back up and running, and investors back into these countries.

Today, we must stand more united and committed than ever as an international community. We must accelerate and adapt the response to changing conditions on the ground as we also prepare for the recovery. We know this deadly virus has a history of resurgence, so we all must remain vigilant even where things look promising. This epidemic is not close to being over. Our end game is not near. The Ebola-affected countries face a very difficult road ahead, and they can count on our continuing support as development partners.