Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I’m pleased to speak to you ahead of the Transforming Education Summit.

The COVID-related school closures and disruptions have deepened the learning crisis and worsened inequalities in education.

We estimate that the share of 10-year-old children in developing countries who are unable to read and understand a basic text is now at 70 percent.

The sharp rise is due to schools being closed for so long and remote learning that proved to be ineffective.

It’s critical that children acquire the basics of literacy – together with numeracy and other foundational skills.

It’s urgent for political leaders to act decisively to recover and accelerate learning and avoid a human capital catastrophe.

They can do that by prioritizing four learning recovery strategies and investments:

- **First, re-enroll and retain children in school.** Expanding cash transfers and school feeding programs can help ensure that children access basic services – such as nutrition, counselling, water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

- **Second, focus on foundational learning.** Foundational learning refers to basic literacy, numeracy, and transferable skills. Lost foundational learning will translate into lower levels of skills, reduced productivity, and less earnings of today’s children once they enter the workforce.

- **Third, assess students’ learning levels.** It’s critical for teachers to measure children’s current learning levels after their return to school, to help target instruction in the classroom to each child’s starting point.

- **Fourth, support teachers** with the practical training and learning materials that are proven to help students recover lost learning rapidly.

There are evidence-based interventions from countries – including São Paulo in Brazil, Karnataka in India, and a few states in Mexico – that policymakers can draw on. To lead to
broad, sustained acceleration of learning, these short-term interventions must be implemented at scale.

The World Bank is committed to working with partners in support of countries to achieve more equal, effective, and resilient education, particularly for girls.

It is possible to recover and accelerate learning and build stronger education systems. It’s critical that children and youth of this generation have the opportunity to shape the future they deserve.

Thank you.