Tackling Corruption to Create a More Just and Prosperous World: Jim Yong Kim

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On behalf of the World Bank Group, I thank the Government of the United Kingdom and Prime Minister David Cameron for his leadership in bringing us together to address the scourge of corruption. All over the world, citizens are rising in protest against governments that are perceived as corrupt. Corruption poses an **enormous obstacle** to economic and social development and the global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030, but we know that we can and must do **much more** to combat it.

**Corruption is, quite simply, stealing from the poor.** It undermines growth and prosperity twice over – not only in the act of siphoning away resources from their intended purposes, but in the long-term effects of services not delivered –vaccines that are not received, school supplies that are not delivered, roads never built. In my travels around the world, I have seen the corrosive impact of corruption on the lives of the poor and the resulting sharp decline of trust that citizens have in their governments.

Twenty years ago, my predecessor James Wolfensohn delivered a ground-breaking speech in which he called on the world to take action against the quote “cancer of corruption.”  Since his speech, we have worked hard to turn aspirations into action: We have **zero tolerance** for corruption, we have opened the World Bank to scrutiny, and we are influencing governments and the private sector to take wide-ranging steps to prevent corruption.

**It is now time to go further.** I join Prime Minister Cameron, President Buhari and Secretary Kerry in a call to action to governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations on a new agenda that draws on citizens’ demands for transparency and accountability, an agenda that draws on all partners and available tools. It’s an agenda that builds on what we at the World Bank are calling “radical transparency” which is both a recognition of the inevitable global acceleration of a transparency that is being forced upon us and our own commitment to use this transparency to fight corruption more effectively. .

**First,** we must continue to push for more information and greater transparency involving public funds. In Sierra Leone, working with the UK’s Department for International Development and our United Nations counterparts, we helped the authorities design and implement a secure system of transfers that ensured the right amount of money would reach the right people on time, transparently and with accountability. This not only contributed to the fight against the Ebola epidemic, but it also built the confidence of the population in the government’s fight against the outbreak.

The publication of the Panama Papers reminds us of the rapid expansion and power of transparency, leading to calls to end tax havens for the very wealthy who hide their money from governments.

**Radical Transparency. There is no going backward.**  We **must** ensure that greater transparency will drive the prevention and uncovering of corruption in the years ahead. Looking forward, we stand ready to support emerging international agreements that will build standards and systems that enhance the exchange of information between countries to avoid the illicit flow of funds.

**Second,** we must use innovation and technology to drive change around the world.Technology can help us improve service delivery and increase scrutiny of how resources are used.Use of biometrically-based Smart Cards in India has meant fewer resources were siphoned off from their intended purposes -- holders received 35 percent more money for a public jobs program than other program beneficiaries and received their payments 30 percent faster. In Mindanao, in the Philippines, geo-spatial tracking and digital photography have contributed to timely construction of roads in conflict-ridden areas.

**Third,** we must do more to get citizens and the private sector involved.  While information is becoming more accessible, it is troubling that the space for citizens and non-state organizations to voice their objections is often diminishing. The death of activists, such as Berta Caceres, Nelson Garcia and so many others in Honduras, has had a chilling effect on accountability. **We must do all we can to protect the defenders of transparency.**

**And finally,** we know that successful anti-corruption efforts must feature a broad coalition of leaders both inside and outside of government, working together. While the global dialogue on corruption has often focused on corruption in the developing world, recent events highlight the role of policies and practices in developed countries that enable corruption. Studies have demonstrated that ill-gotten assets are often sheltered in developed countries, which further impoverishes developing countries.

**We salute and strongly support Prime Minister Cameron’s call for a coordinated global effort to fight corruption.** We say to all those who are enriching themselves through corruption, we are committed and radical transparency is here to stay. At the World Bank Group, our goal is to end extreme poverty in the world and **we will not allow corruption to stand in the way**. We, will **rededicate ourselves** to fighting the cancer of corruption and move ahead with urgency stop those who are stealing from the poor. This is both our moral duty and one of the best possible strategies for economic development. Thank you.