World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim Press Statement in Tunisia

January 23, 2013

World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim
Press statement with Prime Minister H.E. Hamadi Jebali
Tunis, Tunisia

Transcript

Speaking along side Tunisia's Prime Minister H.E. Hamadi Jebali:

DR. KIM: Thank you very much, Your Excellency.

It's a tremendous honor and an inspiration for me to be here in Tunisia. Two years ago, I, along with the rest of the world, were watching as you quite literally changed world history. I was the President of a university in the United States and I remember just how inspired we all were, especially my students, in watching what you've accomplished here.

Now, as we come, we are very proud of the work we've been doing with His Excellency, with the President, with the cabinet, with all the people of Tunisia in taking the first steps toward building the kind of society that you fought so dearly to achieve.

We are here as strong supporters of the Tunisian revolution and we want all of you to know that, despite the fact that there will be some pain going forward, we at the World Bank are bringing evidence and experience so that you can get through this next difficult period as effectively as you can.

I am a physician, I am an anthropologist, I was born in Korea, I grew up in the United States, but I spent my entire life working on fighting poverty, providing health care to people and places like Haiti, in Africa, some of the poorest countries in the world, and I can tell you that our concern is with the people of Tunisia. We know that some of the reforms that are
taking place now are difficult and painful, but we also know that all the societies who have taken the measures, gone ahead and dealt with the short-term pain in order to build the foundation for long-term economic growth, economic growth that includes young people, economic growth that includes women, economic growth that includes the poor, that these kinds of reforms and changes are what is required in order to get to that stage. Country after country after country has done it.

The country I was born in, South Korea, went through very difficult times many times in its history, but in going through the reforms that Tunisia is going through now, it created the foundations for a much broader prosperity.

Let me just say it again: In meetings with the President, the Prime Minister, and the Cabinet, I've been very impressed with how committed they are to the people of Tunisia and how committed they are to doing the right thing so that the shared prosperity that everyone wants will become a reality in the very near future.

More than anything else, I want to come here and thank the Tunisian people. You went through some very difficult times, but in doing what you've done, you've inspired the entire world. Now, we've got to make sure that we finish the job. We've got to make sure that Tunisia is successful in showing that Islam and democracy go together, that you can have economic development that includes everyone. Once Tunisia gets to that stage, and I have great optimism that you will get there, you will be a powerful symbol not just for the region but for the entire world, and I thank you for all the sacrifices that you have made as the Tunisian people in getting us to where we are. We are with you to take the next steps.